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THE HOUSE OF LYS

ONE BOOK OF ITS HISTORY

A TALE

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL W. G. HAMLEY

LATE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS

AUTHOR OF 'GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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THE HOUSE OF LYS.

CHAPTER I.

A CHANCE MEETING.

THE parish of Brigend, like most parishes in the Vert district, is richly wooded. Where the roads are narrow, as is frequently the case, they would soon become impassable to broad and high vehicles if pains were not taken in pruning and levelling the branches and roots. That road, for instance, which leads from Brigend village to the town of Wyde, is for the most part very shady when the leaves are out; but it is different now from what it was a quarter of a century ago. It is a broad, level way at present; the hedges on both sides have been encroached on with some severity—or rather, the encroachments which the hedges had for centuries been making on the way

have been sharply rescinded; and the old toll-gate and toll-house, which used to be such pretty objects among the trees, about a mile from Wyde, have altogether disappeared. You may see to-day, laid bare in many places by the trimmer's tools, the ancient stones which have so long supported the hedges; but in the days of the toll-gate, either hedge puffed itself out, quite independently, in banks and swellings whereon clustered the honeysuckle or the wild rose, or in tiny thickets of yellow furze, taking its own elbow-room, and coming down with very lazy steps from its crest to where its fringe of moss or green grass lost itself in the path.

In the spring of 1854 the toll-gate was there; and on a bright afternoon in that spring, a young man on a rather small grey horse was moving along the road with his face toward Wyde. He travelled leisurely, and seemed to enjoy the fair weather and the leafy shade, through which the May wind was rioting in the gentlest manner. He came of a race which was never much given to pensiveness; but yet it is possible that he was eyeing the familiar scene with more than usual interest, for the day was approaching when he would have to leave it for an indefinite time, perhaps for ever.

As he neared the toll-bar, a man who had been leaning against the post undid its fastening (for it

had been closed), and with some exertion pushed it open. The horseman advanced and chucked his copper through the open hatch, when the man who had been staying the heavy gate somehow let it slip and was unable to recover his hold of it. It accordingly swung with force, and its thick stile would have violently and injuriously struck both man and beast, had not the former by a sudden pressure of heel and rein made the animal spring to a new direction, oblique to the coming mischief, and then, strengthening himself in his saddle, caught the gate on his hand.

An instant after, he had raised his whip and smitten him who had so clumsily let the gate slip, saying, "I'll teach you, you rascal, to hold a heavy gate more carefully another time." And in an instant more he had repented of dealing the stroke, for he perceived that the man was a cripple.

"Here—take this," he said, holding out a piece of gold; "I hadn't an idea that you were lame."

"Curse your money!" yelled the man, as he still writhed with the smart; "d'ye think a' honest body'll take that in payment of your barbarity?"

At this moment the gate-keeper appeared at his hatch, and in some sort comprehending the situation, said, "Come now, Michael, you be never going to be such a fool as to refuse his honour's gift; you couldn't earn it in a fortnight."

"No," answered Michael, whose bodily anguish was passing off; "it's little I can earn for anybody, and I ought to be thankful if I can pick up a trifle for my dying sister by getting my back flayed. I'll take your money," said he, turning to the horseman, "and I've no thanks to return. You more than owed it. This," added he, bitterly, "is how the poor and helpless must be glad to gain a mouthful."

The toll-keeper was beginning in a deprecatory tone, when the horseman, throwing down another sovereign, said, "The first was for yourself, you know; there's another for your sister." Then to the toll-keeper, "Who is he? where does he live?"

"He belongs, sir, to William Clipp of Brigend. There's seven of 'em, two in declines and one deformed."

"William Clipp?"

"Yes, your honour."

"Good day." And the young man rode forward.

"Proud and haughty scorner is your name," said Michael, looking after him. And the toll-keeper, now that the young man was out of hearing, seemed rather to incline to Michael's opinion. "At any rate," said he, after some little conversation had passed, "they be open-handed if they ben't gracious; and you'll likely get something more for your sick ones."

Meanwhile the rider, as he went on his way, had

been reflecting, not for the first time, what a tiresome body these sick poor were, and how utterly out of place they would be in the world if it were not that they were a means of bringing out the generosity of persons of distinction. Quite recognising, and not grudgingly, that he and his relations owed certain duties to Michael Clipp and *his* relations, the young man was now determining that he would go and despatch a doctor to visit and report on William Clipp's daughters before he executed the errand which was taking him to Wyde. He did accordingly, when he reached the town, make straight for the house of a surgeon.

As he neared the door a female figure was coming down the steps, hiding her face in her handkerchief, and apparently weeping. Spite of her emotion it was easy to see that she had a graceful carriage; and when she withdrew her handkerchief, as presently she did, the redness of her eyes, and her distress, had but little dimmed the beauty of a very striking face. Indeed the face and figure were the more striking because her apparel was coarse and humble—not at all of the kind which commonly covers a form like hers. It was said just now that the young man looked upon poverty and sickness as institutions for a curious and speculative regard: it was not meant that he was without human feeling towards a hand-

some and interesting damsel, even though she were in a humble station. His manner towards the fair sex was always very gentle: in this instance his feeling of interest was apparent as well as his natural urbanity.

When the young woman reached the bottom of the steps, she hesitated as to which way she should turn. She was evidently perplexed, and a sob escaped her. Remarking which, the gentleman, to whom she was now pretty close, said, "I fear you are much distressed; can I help you in any way?" And she replied at once, very simply, "Dr Plowman has gone into the country, sir, and I wanted him to come directly to mother; I don't think there is a minute to lose." And she sobbed again.

"Shall I ride after the doctor? Is he far away?" asked he.

"He is gone to Redthrop, and will not be back till evening. I thank you much, sir; but it would be necessary to tell him many things which you could not explain, in order that he might go provided with proper remedies." There was then a pause for a moment, after which the girl said again, "I am very bold, sir, but if I had the horse, I could find him quickly enough, and tell him all that is needed."

"You shall have the horse, with all my heart," answered the gallant; "but where to get a side-

saddle I don't know, nor whether the horse would stand one."

"A man's saddle, or no saddle," answered the girl, brightening, "only a bare back, so that I can get there, and I shall be so thankful."

Before her last words were spoken he had alighted. He may have had his doubts whether her zeal might not be making her foolhardy; but experiment would solve that doubt presently, and he was not one to waste precious time in unnecessary argument. As, seeing that he meant what he said, she moved round to the left side of the horse, she told him, "I am widow Knowles's daughter, of St Ann's Cottage, in Brigend, sir. I'll take every care of the horse, and bring him back to you when my errand is done. Where shall I find you?"

"I am in no hurry," was the answer. "I shall be engaged in Wyde all the afternoon, and shall not leave this till six or half-past. You can bring him to the Red Lion. My name is du Lys."

He mounted her and shortened her stirrup. She turned the other stirrup over the horse's neck, as if she had been thus mounted before, and took his whip, which he offered. "God bless you, sir, for this!" she said, as she put the animal in motion.

"I am afraid he is given to cantering with the left leg," he called after her. Then he added to himself,

“By Jove, she doesn’t seem much to care which leg it is! What a splendidly built girl she is! She’s too modest and well bred to have come out of a circus, or I should have fancied that she’d jumped through balloons. Let me see; Knowles — Knowles — I remember a farmer of that name on the Sandacres ten years ago. Remarkably handsome girl. I hope she’ll find the doctor.”

As Captain du Lys had some business in Wyde that day which he could see to better on foot than on horseback, his politeness to the damsel Knowles did not cost him any inconvenience. He went away to an India-rubber factory belonging to a house in London, where, for the better part of two hours, he was occupied in inspecting waterproof bags, cloaks, and bed-covers, and choosing India-rubber cups, jugs, bottles, and basins for himself and for companions who had asked him to provide for them while he was in the neighbourhood of the works. England was going to war again after a very long peace. Advancing art had provided for military men many a comfort and convenience which were unknown in previous wars. But these were for the most part untried even now; and some judgment was required to select those which would be most useful, and which would best stand the wear and tear of the camp. It was a great as well as a new idea that a warm dry bed might stand

in a puddle, and that a bag, after being carried through a torrent or a tempest, might give out a perfectly dry flannel; and a man who was going to encounter the circumstance of glorious war might well give his attention to inventions like these. Du Lys was, it is believed, very deeply interested in his examination. He made several purchases, and promised to call again and see further articles of war which were in preparation.

While he was on his way from the factory to the Red Lion, he saw his horse with its fair rider coming up the street. The girl dropped lightly to the ground when she saw him, and led the horse to meet him. "I thank you, sir, so much for your kindness," she said. She was not weeping now, but her face was flushed with exercise, and her eyes glistened.

"I hope you found the doctor," said du Lys.

"That I did," answered she; "and I got over to Redthrop so quickly, that I ventured, as you were not in haste, to go with him to Brigend, from which I have last come."

"Am I right in hoping that he has given you some comfort?"

"Yes, sir. He says mother's attack was not of the kind which I had feared, and that its effects will probably pass away in a few days."

"Well, I am very glad to have been useful. You seem quite at home on a horse."

“Oh dear, yes. I used to ride in all fashions when I was younger. I don’t ride now ; but it’s a thing one never forgets. Your kindness in helping me is a thing that I shall never forget either, sir. Bless you for it. I should be glad if I ever could do anything in return, which, I fear, is not likely.”

And she made him a courtesy with much ease and native grace, and then walked away with a light, free step. Du Lys looked after her, thinking to himself that this was one of Nature’s aristocracy. “Gad,” he muttered, “there is a style about her, spite of her ill-made dress : those heels deserve a better pair of boots, too. I think I should improve the acquaintance so oddly begun if I were going to stay in this neighbourhood. But one has something to think about just now besides fine girls. They’ll come in very conveniently after ‘grim-visaged war hath’—what is it? well, after the war’s over ; but it hasn’t begun yet, and it leaves one deuced little time to think of anything else.” So soliloquising, he made his way to the Red Lion, where he ordered some corn for his horse, and where he himself took a cool draught to pass the time.

Towards evening he was once more on his grey, journeying towards the toll-bar where he had lashed Michael Clipp, when he overtook a female pedestrian, who proved to be no other than the girl Knowles, making for home.

"You didn't go directly back, I perceive," he said, "and so we were destined to speak again."

"I had to call at one or two houses in Wyde," she answered, "and so my return is rather late. But a neighbour had undertaken to stay with mother before I first left home, and I made time to get an errand or two done."

"I made a call before I left," du Lys said. "I went back again to Dr Plowman's and saw him. By the way, do you know any people in Brigend called Clipp?"

"Oh yes. William Clipp is a labourer, and not a very strong man; and he has many children, and some of them are sickly. I am afraid that——"

"Well, as I want to ask you something about them, I'll alight, if you don't mind;" saying which, Captain du Lys swung himself to the ground and passed the rein over his horse's head. He made his inquiries about the Clipp family, and found that he had something more to say after that. He wished to know whether his new acquaintance was related to the family that lived at Sandacres; and he discovered that her father had once held that farm, but that he was dead, and she and her mother were now tenants of St Ann's Cottage, not farming nor following any regular employment, for Mrs Knowles was very delicate. Du Lys recollected that the late Mr Knowles was something of a sports-

man; and then he learned that he had been uncommonly fond of horses, that there were always several nags at Sandacres, and it was there that the young woman had acquired her facility in riding. From the way in which she spoke, it seemed as if the horses and the sporting had run away with the substance which ought to have remained after Mr Knowles's decease, and that those whom he had left behind had no reason to remember his tastes with satisfaction.

"I daresay you walk often along this road in the afternoon, Miss Knowles?"

"I often do, either this way or on the other side of the village; but nobody calls me Miss Knowles, and you shouldn't."

"What do they call you?"

"By my Christian name."

"And that is?"

"Thyrza."

"How on earth came you to be called Thyrza?"

"I suppose because my godfathers and godmothers so arranged. Don't you like the name, sir?"

"Well, I don't know why I shouldn't, and I think I shall in future. I only thought at first it wasn't a bit the sort of name I should have guessed to be yours."

"What name do you think would be fitting for me?"

"Well, I don't know about fitting; but you look so

thoroughly an English girl, that I quite expected you to have a name more common among our people. I daresay it's your mother's name."

"No."

"At any rate, it's a name that I shall retain a very pleasing recollection of. And now, gentle Thyrza—if Thyrza it must be—I will bid you good evening, for my way turns off before we reach the village. I hope I shall see you again." The cavalier mounted his horse, again received Thyrza's farewell courtesy, and rode off briskly, conscious that he could barely reach his destination in time for dinner. He had been greatly pleased with Thyrza, and he did not exactly know why. Of course he knew that she was a fine, straight, handsome girl; but it required something more than that to arrest the attention of a connoisseur in female attractions such as Captain du Lys thought himself to be. The explanation probably was, that she did not receive the notice of Captain du Lys, whom she must have known to be a member of one of the grandest and proudest families of the Vert district, as most village maidens would have done. She was not overcome by his condescension, and did not meet him with giggling, and shamefacedness, and silly monosyllabic answers; neither did she, inclining to the opposite weakness, lay herself out to be complaisant and captivating to such a beau at the cost of exposing

any amount of ignorance and folly. She had been quiet, self-possessed, frank, and, to outward appearance, unconscious; and she had seemed as indifferent to the effect which she might produce as if—as if she had been a maiden in his own rank of life, the pen had nearly written; but that expression would imperfectly have conveyed the idea that is intended, because many maidens in Captain du Lys's rank would certainly have come very far short of the simple dignity of Thyrsa in such circumstances.

It was necessary, a few lines above, to limit Thyrsa's unconsciousness to outward appearance, because in reality she was much impressed by many of the events of the afternoon. A young man of unquestionably good birth and position had been extremely kind to her in her distress, and had without hesitation trusted her with a valuable horse. He had afterwards shown considerable interest in the sorrow which had been troubling her; and when accident brought him again to her side, he had not pestered her with compliments, nor used the patronising manner or the swagger often so powerful in impressing vulgar minds, but had conversed with her sensibly and affably. It was hardly against him in her estimation that he was good-looking and well grown, nor that his manner was gentle and respectful.

In ordinary circumstances Thyrsa Knowles would

not have permitted, far less would she have sought, any acquaintance between herself and a young squire. But accident had taken the lead in this case, and left her very little choice. The young man had been exceedingly polite and useful to her, and the least that she could do was to be civil to him when he addressed her. Though she entirely conformed herself to the station in which her lot had placed her, yet Thyrsa had tastes and inclinations which may be generally considered unfortunate for persons of her class. She could appreciate a more refined way of life than she had much chance of experiencing. Her fancy leaned toward polished manners and elegance generally. As we have seen, she was not in the least a die-away young person, but, on the contrary, lithe, courageous, and eminently practical; only, if she had a choice, she would mix a little grace with all with which she could be actively or passively concerned. Such being her disposition, it would have been a marvel if she had not been gratified by Captain du Lys's notice of her. She was young, she suspected no evil, and her meeting with him left a glowing and a very pleasing recollection, which she was at no pains to efface.

Thyrsa, without hesitation, told her sick mother that evening how kind a gentleman of the house of du Lys had been to her in the afternoon, and how she had not found Dr Plowman at home, but had fetched him from

Redthrop, having been enabled to do so by Mr du Lys's assistance. She could not tell Mrs Knowles which Mr du Lys it was who had befriended her, because she knew nothing about the different members of that family; and she did not mention that Mr du Lys had overtaken her on her way home, because her mother was forbidden by the doctor to talk much, and the mention of this incident might have led to conversation. Had it been prudent to do so, she would very willingly have narrated the whole adventure, and told honestly how she had been affected by it. But she shrank from alluding before any of the neighbours—who would come and go doing little kind offices for the invalid—to her having spoken to Mr du Lys at all. When she had appeared on a grey horse in the afternoon she had been accompanied by the doctor, who was naturally credited with having somehow procured the steed for her. Had the men of the village been at home in the afternoon, some of them might have recognised the horse; but they were all out at work, and to the matrons and maids of the little place there was no individuality in horse-flesh.

Sly, and perhaps coarse, jokes or bits of caution would have been likely to follow any confidence made to the villagers; but by her mother, Thyrza was sure that her feelings would be understood and responded to. And this was not because Mrs Knowles was vain

or silly, but because she could look at a matter of this kind in a calmer and more intelligent way than most of the peasantry could. In truth, there was a tradition of gentility in her family; she did not look upon rich people as so sublime or so wicked as they were very generally represented to be; and she would not have seen anything surprising in a young gentleman being quite ready to improve an acquaintance which he might have accidentally made with her daughter.

The poor people perceived that Mrs Knowles's language and manners were superior to theirs, and there was therefore among them a general conviction that she was "a sort of a lady, like." They knew that her late husband had once been in easy circumstances; but very few knew anything about her own antecedents, and she herself never made allusion to them before her acquaintance.

A generation or two back, Mrs Knowles's family had begun to make a descent in the world. Her mother had scarcely been born within the envied myriad. She herself was a land agent's daughter, and she had married a yeoman. But her grandparents on her mother's side were once people of wealth and position; and although wealth and station had disappeared, a souvenir of gentle blood abode with the reduced descendants, as the odour of a perfume will linger about a room or a piece of furniture from which

the real presence of the sweet substance has long departed.

The late Mr Knowles had died rather suddenly. When the property which he left behind him had been sold, and his debts had been paid, there remained a sum too trifling to even subsist his widow and orphan. But Mrs Knowles had a brother who aided her in her extremity, and enabled her to take the very unpretending cottage which had been named after St Ann. St Ann's Cottage did not belong to any of the house of du Lys, but was rented of a very large proprietor and very popular magnate of the Vert district, Lord Hardyknute by title, who, indeed, owned all the little village of Brigend. When the mother was well, she and her daughter added a little to their scanty means by sewing; but of late Mrs Knowles had been too ill to work, and Thyrza could do little more than nurse her and see to the wants of the small household. Often in the afternoon she would leave her mother to the care of a neighbour and go off to Wyde, or to some neighbouring village, for medicine or for other needs.

Only two days after their first meeting, Captain du Lys and Michael Clipp met again; only this time in Brigend village, or just outside it. The Captain was sitting on a stile smoking, and when he saw Michael, he called to him and asked about his sick relatives. Michael having answered these inquiries, and having

further acknowledged the receipt of sundry comforts and provisions which had been sent to their home by the Captain, received again a gratuity from the young squire. The latter then asked him if there was not another sick person in the village, a Mrs Knowles of St Ann's Cottage, and whether she was properly cared for. To which Michael replied that he understood that the widow Knowles had been for some time an invalid, and unable to do any sort of work. He believed, however, that she had some relations who saw that she didn't want; and he knew that she had a daughter who was very well able to take care of her.

"You'll very likely have seen her pass down the road a little while ago? I did," added Michael.

"No, I haven't been here long," answered the Captain. "What is she like?"

"Well, she be a stout, strapping girl, straight as a Maypole, with a wholesome colour in her cheeks." Michael, it will be perceived, noted principally in Thyrza those endowments which were wanting in his own debilitated sisters; the poor soul coveted them, perhaps.

"She has not passed since I have been here," said du Lys. "She went this way, you say?"

"Ay, she went that way. She's likely gone across to Goody Clement's in Churchends, to get some arrow-root, and them sort of things."

“Well, I hope we shall have some better accounts of your family,” said the squire, rising. “The doctor says he thinks your sister may get better yet if she is properly cared for.”

“God send it!” answered Michael; and the squire left him and strolled away along the road.

No reader will be surprised to hear that du Lys fell in with Thyrza Knowles when she was on her way back from Churchends, or that he made her walk across the fields much pleasanter in fact, and a good deal shorter seemingly, than it would have been if she had made it unaccompanied. What passed between them has not been recorded; but it is known that Thyrza came back from that walk in rather high spirits. This walk led to some others wherein Thyrza and du Lys were companions. There had been, however, but few such meetings before Thyrza began to ask herself whether they were proper, however pleasant they might be. Being a sensible girl, she was not long in deciding that such walks were not proper; and being an honest and a resolute girl, she no sooner perceived what was proper to do than she determined to do it. She told Captain du Lys, very firmly and very plainly, that she was under the necessity of declining to walk with him any more. She refused to give him the least clue to her probable movements, and she entreated him as a gentleman and a man of honour to refrain from seek-

ing her and crossing her path. The young man combated her resolution for a time; but Thyrza was so quiet, and at the same time so firm, she appealed to him so sensibly and so forcibly, that he could not doubt her sincerity; and instead of classing this among those mandates of the softer sex which are intended to be disobeyed, he yielded compliance, as he would have done to a high-born, spirited *demoiselle*.

It must not, however, be supposed, that in thus peremptorily dismissing her aristocratic admirer, Thyrza Knowles acted with cold-blooded caprice. She did not betray any emotion, and she did not nourish within herself any sentimental regret for a conduct which must, she knew, be persisted in at any cost. But for all that, she had had her struggle with herself; she had gone through one of those violences to natural feeling which are figured in the Scripture by the plucking out of an eye or the excision of a right hand. Such natures persist and conquer, but not without an effort. They do not enjoy the conflict nor the victory. Thyrza Knowles had summarily extinguished the pleasantest passage in all her life. She had been what Captain du Lys would have called "deucedly hard hit," but she didn't let the Captain discover this.

CHAPTER II.

AN ANCIENT SEAT. HO, HO !

THE old Tower of Lys, which gives its name to the comparatively modern mansion adjoining it, is still standing. Considering that it is nearly a thousand years old, it is in wonderful perservation. The massive walls, though they did some service in De Montfort's days, and were privy to a good many secrets (impenetrable to us) of Plantagenet times, yet escaped molestation in later wars, which were the only ones calculated to hurt them. And as artillery and other incendiary agents never disturbed them, they made very light of the thousand years. The roof and floors had been renewed more than once since the first erection ; but they *had* been renewed, and so the interior of the old stronghold was warmer and drier than many a modern pile. It served chiefly as muniment chambers of the House du Lys, and was now entered only from a strong covered-passage which led to it

from the mansion. The latter, it is believed, was not the first house which had stood on that site. As early as the holders of keeps and castles had thought it prudent to sleep outside of the citadel, there had been accommodation of some kind on that area, which had been enclosed by a moat and ramparts, traces of which were still visible on the ground, and all of which were portrayed, as they stood in the days of the last Plantagenets, on some wonderfully quaint old drawings.

The pile, as it stood now, told of many generations. It had been a long time growing. The era of its oldest part was lost in antique mist before its most modern portion was erected. Consequently, as a whole, it was incongruous, but not on that account unsightly. Nobody would think of building a mansion patched of so many styles—that would be to commit an impropriety, to make a costly caricature. But as work contributed to by age after age, the Tower of Lys was an imposing mass.

It was much to be suspected that the very oldest bits of the architecture had once belonged to a religious edifice. There was a cellar containing Norman pillars in good preservation—a crypt, in fact ; and above this, parts of two walls of the same date were still standing, built of Norman stone. To these two walls had been appended, in the reign of Edward III. or thereabouts, the structure which, together with them, now

forms the banqueting-hall, over the crypt. The galleries which join this hall to the modern part, run through buildings of various ages, which in turn, no doubt, formed the principal mansion. One of these buildings had been of black oak and stone, as is testified by a portion which remains to this day, not prominently displaying itself, but shut in by other work. The architect of the modern dwelling (of the time of the Stuarts) cleverly changed the front, or rather gave to the edifice a second front, at right angles to the first. Thus, seen from the ordinary approach, the halls of Lys are a noble and symmetrical building. To understand their various stages, the old front must be inspected; and that would be rarely done until after the first impression of the fabric should have been received by a visitor.

In the galleries and halls were antiquities in plenty; and there were legends connecting many of them with mighty men of the Lys—a race renowned as it was ancient.

Although the old place had been undoubtedly constructed for defence, it required a little thought to dispel a feeling of the absurdity of this in one standing on the spot; because there are some (certainly two) of the surrounding eminences which, at no great distances, overlook the site of the stronghold—from whence artillery might seriously afflict the Tower of

Lys and its immediate surroundings. But presently we remember that when the tower rose there was no engine of war which could project a missile over the spaces which separate it from the neighbouring heights. The old lines had been so constructed as to screen the plateau of the hill in great measure from view of its commanding neighbours ; and the old tower was so situated as to see throughout their length approaches which were, in old days, of far more consequence than the higher eminences. The site of the ancient work had been naturally strong, and it had been strengthened by art. But now its boast was, not that it could accurately survey and watch an approaching enemy, but that it commanded grand and lovely views of celebrated parts of one of the richest districts in England—vales and woods and fertile fields. No views in our island could be fairer than those from the Tower of Lys. The sunsets from thence were famed ; the effects of the mists and sunlight of the valleys were the studies of nearly every modern artist ; the artist himself, on his coign of vantage, contributed on most fair days, like the angler in his lurking nook, to give spirit to the scenes ; and the lovely face of the country, assisted by the genius of the old place, never failed to raise emotion in every one who could muse and feel.

Any one who may take the trouble to consult the

pages of Domesday-book which relate to the district of Haut Vert will be satisfied as to the importance which the du Lys enjoyed in the Conqueror's days. Scarcely any invader was so richly endowed. Not only the Vert, but much of the surrounding country, appears to have been meted out as lordships of the house. It seems as if there were no end to the enumeration beginning with "Lys habet." Very early, however, the family showed a disposition to take the losing side when there were divisions in the land; and it suffered in consequence, being shorn, from time to time, of its manors. It stood by King John through all his folly and poltroonery, and would have had no Magna Charta if it could have dictated. In the wars of the Roses it was Lancastrian, and it had to buy its peace with Edward IV. by the surrender of many a rich acre.

In Stuart days the du Lys were Cavaliers and Malignants. It is not stated that they were despoiled by the Parliament of any of their remaining land, but they were grievously impoverished by sacrifices made for the king, of which not one farthing was given back to them at the Restoration, as they were too proud to advance their claims in the only manner in which they could be preferred with success at the Court of Charles II. The "Condolence with Walter du Lys"—a short poem on this subject (now in a case in the

east gallery), wherein the loyalty and devotion of the family are greatly extolled, and its hard treatment very finely reflected on—is declared, in an attached MS. signed W. du Lys, to be Waller's, and in his own handwriting, although it has never yet had a place in any collection of his works.

The du Lys of James II.'s time stood for the king against Monmouth, but seems after that to have withdrawn himself very much from the disputes of the reign. He would not draw his sword against his sovereign ; and yet, being a good Protestant, he could not uphold the proceedings of the king,

A du Lys was distinguished under Marlborough ; but the fortunes of the house were not seriously affected (farther than has been already stated) under the Stuarts or the first Georges. The du Lys, however, of the regency in George III.'s reign, had the misfortune to be honoured by the notice and favour of the Prince Regent, he being an exceedingly handsome and agreeable man. One consequence of this distinction was, that the lands of Lys, already cruelly reduced as compared with the original grants, were once more circumscribed ; and the family, being able no longer to make great display, hid its diminished head in seclusion, and in much sullen indignation at its poverty.

Thus one sees that the house du Lys had been very

much richer and grander than it now was. Consequently there were times when the world thought more of it than at present. But there never was—there never could have been—a time when the family thought more of itself than it did now. It seemed to make up in appreciation of itself what it lost in the outward signs of greatness, and to gather pride as it parted with territory. It was an obvious resource for a house so situated, and men who incontestably were “somebodies” in the land, to seek public employment, and to endeavour to earn some modern distinction which might bring back the truant wealth; but the members of it had reached a position from which it was very difficult to achieve success in that way. They had an impression that they had suffered grievous wrong because they had been allowed to grow comparatively poor; and they would not deign to serve a country which had been so unmindful of them. They had, moreover, become so haughty and overbearing, that they could co-operate with nobody in public business as it is transacted nowadays. They condescended to some offices about the Court, of very great antiquity, and with duties which were now merely nominal. The du Lys might serve the sovereign personally, but could make no effort for a country which was yearly exalting dealers and adventurers, and seemed hardly to recognise the fact that the

lineal descendants of men who had assisted in the Norman conquest wanted worship, and would not have objected to some material assistance, so that it had been tendered with becoming humility.

The grandfather of the present baronet had been an associate of the Prince Regent, and had not by that connection improved his fortunes nor benefited his line in any way. The present baronet's father had succeeded to a diminished and hard-pressed estate soon after the peace of 1815, and in addition to the personal neglect from which he believed himself to suffer, had to witness a series of social and political changes which he could understand only by the supposition that the whole world had been given over to evil spirits and madness, except the house du Lys, and one or two other houses, the sanctity of which no demon would dare to invade. So disgusted and disheartened was he by the falling of his lines to him, that he almost withdrew himself from the outer world, and set up an ephod and teraphim for himself in the Tower of Lys, where he thought to keep alive a pure political faith until the world should recover its senses.

Of the two sons whom he left, one was the present baronet, who seemed to take things much as his father had done. He would neither be content with the fortunes of his house nor take any pains to improve

them. He had married a woman of high rank, who had borne him a son ; and this is about the sum of what was known of him by the world at large. The few persons who were permitted to have a more intimate knowledge of him thought that there were the makings of an honest fellow about him, but that these were altogether overlaid by the family pride which was the besetting sin of his house.

Captain du Lys was the second son. Serving in the Household brigade was not looked upon as serving the unworthy State ; and so this young man was a captain and lieutenant in the Guards. The Guards were going to the war, and so Captain du Lys was about to leave the Court and the capital to see a little active service ; and probably the prospect of the change was not disagreeable to him. The old blood of Lys, after stagnating for some time, tingled once more at the thought of the camp and the battle. The young officer, as has been already seen, wore his pride with something of a difference from his brother. He had not the family honours nor the family wrongs committed to him in the first degree, and so he was a little more inclined than his brother to be sociable. The illustrious line had dwindled down to that brother, himself, and his nephew : there was no other du Lys. And the Captain, *partant pour la Syrie*, like many a du Lys before him, had come down into the Vert region to say his adieux

to his only near relations, and to look once more upon the familiar fields and woods.

Not much of his leave of absence remained at the time when he first met Thyrza Knowles in Wyde; and the end of it was at hand when Thyrza told him that he was to seek her society no more. Had she not interdicted their future meeting, it is probable that he might have walked with her once or twice more, and then have bidden her a gay farewell, and felt that she had been extremely useful in enlivening some of the hours of a visit to the country, which was decidedly rather dull. But Thyrza's dismissal, and particularly the manner of it, sent him home piqued, and a little humbled to think that a country lass should with so much ease have given him his *congé*. Tears, rage, reproaches, coyness, intended to increase his admiration, he knew the parries for, thoroughly; but this power of a rustic beauty perplexed him. It was as if a ploughman had shown himself an adept with the small sword, or a cabby had quoted Chesterfield.

"By Jove, she was as stately as a duchess!" he said to himself again and again, as he thought the scene over. Of course he could not help admitting that she was right; but although that might make her view of the occurrence satisfactory, yet it was no salve to his *amour propre*. He had been quietly worsted at a game wherein he thought himself a proficient. If he

had left her a few days hence, as he had expected to do, and never thought about her again, things would have taken their natural and proper course; but to have her dismiss him!—it didn't harmonise with the fitness of things at all. Well, in a few days he would be in other scenes and following new pursuits; so what did it matter?

To say "What did it matter?" was a good way of disposing of an incident which was, after all, the merest trifle in a gallant's life. But when he had dismissed all thought of the affair as a trial of his science, there arose just the least feeling of regret at having seen the last of Thyrza Knowles. Her look and manner in parting from him came vividly to his recollection. She was a deuced handsome girl, and that was all about it. Not one of the common lot, you know, at all.

He dreamt about Thyrza, and thought about her while he lay awake in his bed; and the more he thought, the more her image seemed to present itself. He fancied that he should like to do something princely by her; send her a handsome present, or commit some other act of benevolence towards her, as soon as he got back to London—anonymously, of course, but she might possibly guess at who the generous giver was. Then he thought what an ass he was to be troubling himself about this peasant: he must be ill and out of condition to let his thoughts run in such

a direction. So he went out to have a canter and brace his nerves. But the sight of the grey horse brought back the graceful figure of Thyrza as he saw her ride away from Dr Plowman's door; and he was off dreaming again, and in no wise dissipating his weakness. The truth was, that it was deucedly irritating to have a simple girl show herself so proof against one's fascinations.

He remembered that he might possibly again meet Thyrza by accident, as he had met her at first. Of course he could not be responsible for that. And after that idea occurred to him, it is to be feared that he did not take especial pains to prevent such an accident. The hours rolled on, however, without any accidental meeting having happened, and it was now the eve of his departure. He had been doing something more than not avoiding a meeting for the last two days; he had been anxiously seeking one. He furthermore was carrying about with him a rather pretty locket, which he hoped to present to Thyrza. On this last afternoon he was seated, smoking, on the same stile whence he had before descried Michael Clipp; and as Michael did some humble errand in that direction every day, it was not extraordinary that du Lys saw him again now. He made again kind inquiries concerning Michael's invalid relations, and again presented him with a very acceptable piece of money. Then

they held a short conversation on various topics connected with the country, in the course of which du Lys carelessly, and somewhat suddenly, put in with—

“By the by, Michael, I saw Miss What’s-her-name, the widow’s daughter, you know, since we spoke about her. She is quite as stout and healthy-looking as you said.”

“Yes,” answered Michael; “and a good thing too, where there’s sickness. If we’d a stout lass now like that in our house, ’twould make a deal of difference.”

“I daresay. It’s a pity that some of your people are not strong and active. This young woman gets through a good deal of work, eh?”

“Ah, she do that; and she don’t seem to mind it neither. She’s fresh and hearty at eventide, just like in the morning. Only a while ago I met her on her road to Churchends, and I says to myself, ‘You be a fine maiden, sure enough. You eat the meat of one, and you do the work of three. ’Tis a’most a pity your face is so fair; for you may get spoiled with vanity. If you keep sober and steady as now you be, you’ll make a nice wife for some honest man.’”

And Michael heaved a sigh which was more expressive than words. It was perhaps all that he allowed himself by way of complaint against the fate which had misshapen him.

“ I that am rudely stamped, and want love’s majesty
To strut before a wanton, ambling nymph.”

“ She’s across the field now, you say, Michael ? ”

“ For certain she is,” Michael answered. “ She makes nothing of that journey.”

Presently du Lys threw away his cigar, which was not smoked out, and bidding Michael good afternoon, made away towards home. Now Michael Clipp, although he may not have been very acute, was, like many deformed people, much given to reflection on men and things. He had noted how the squire had prematurely rejected his weed ; and, as he trudged along, he began to think, as he often did, of the inequalities of life—how some could afford to waste, while others hadn’t enough to keep life in. He thought about the rich man and Lazarus, and wondered whether the poor would certainly have the best of it hereafter. Was it possible that he, Michael, could ever be in that state of affluence when he could afford to throw away a luxury that he had hardly begun to taste ? If he could afford it, he didn’t think that he ever should do it. Wilful waste makes woful want. Now if Squire du Lys intended to move away directly, and would only be able to take two or three pulls at his cigar, why needed he have lit it at all ? “ Well, perhaps,” thought he, resolving to be rigidly impartial in the case under examination—“ perhaps he was minded at

first to stay and have out his smoke, but he suddenly remembered some business or some engagement which caused him to hurry away." Then Michael remembered that on the former occasion of their having a colloquy, the squire had behaved almost exactly in the same manner. Now he might have loitered too long once, and had to go off in haste; but it was strange if he did the same thing twice. Hereupon Michael considered whether anything in their conversation had made the squire desire to end it abruptly. No; nothing. That morning, when the Captain left him, he had been speaking of the widow Knowles's daughter—an indifferent enough subject; and what had they been speaking of on the other occasion?—eh—eh—what was it, now?

"Dashed if we wasn't speaking of the same lass then, too!" recollected Michael; "well, that's odd." Then he remembered how on both occasions he had given the information that Thyrza Knowles was away across the fields to Churchends. A minute more and he gave a long whistle. "He's following the poor girl," said he aloud, in his excitement; and all the rancorous feeling which he had exhibited at the toll-bar arose again towards the proud and haughty house of Lys. Well, perhaps he was wronging Captain du Lys, after all. He would be sorry to do that. But it would be very easy to satisfy himself, now that the

doubt was started, as to whether there was reason in it or not. Michael's errand was soon despatched ; and then, rather welcoming a little business in which he could feel some interest, he started off on the path to Churchends, his pulses beating more rapidly than was their wont.

They who are acquainted with the Vert district know well that the path across the fields from Brigend to Churchends is one of the prettiest of its rural walks. It is joyous in the spring-time all through the flowery meadows which stretch away from Brigend. The expanse is quite a park, with its spreading trees and its occasional small thickets, where berries innumerable are just forming now, that they may redden the autumn. And after you pass the gate and enter the coppice which hangs on the hillside, the way is still delightful—the soft mossy grass refusing to yield its ground even to the many feet that are for ever crushing it. Can any one who has seen them forget the wild flowers in that coppice, or the patches of heather ? But the greatest beauty of the excursion is seen beyond this, where the track makes right downward to the valley, and the ground is much, but not very ruggedly, broken, with little faces of white stone cropping out here and there among the soft, lank grass. Then, when the eye is clear of the wood again, it is very pleasing to look

straight at Churchends resting on a salient spur of the opposite hill; while between it and the beholder, the mill with the tall thorns about it, and the wooden bridge half hidden by elder-bushes, nestle deep down; and the vale, branching to right and left of Churchends, runs away into long distances.

Along this very path was it that Michael Clipp went, halting quite briskly, that afternoon. He walked a considerable distance without observing anything that repaid his quest. If he had continued to keep as steadily to his track as he did at first, he would have had an awkward *rencontre*. But it was fortunate for him, on this occasion, that he was a little addicted to idle and vagrant habits. When he was nearly through the coppice he heard a rustling in a little hollow to his left, and having turned aside to ascertain the cause of it, he descried a gilded snake making its way along the underwood. It was the first that he had seen for the year. He conceived a desire to capture it; and he used several ingenious stratagems with that object, almost forgetting for a while the purpose which had brought him into the coppice. But his devices were abortive; the snake made his escape out of sight, and then Michael stumbled forward once more toward Churchends. He did not, however, go back to the point where he had left the path, but made for the edge of the wood,

which he knew to be near. Before he left the screen of the bushes, he was aware of some one standing outside on the brow of the hill. It was Captain du Lys, shading his eyes with his hand and looking down into the valley.

"I knowed it," said Michael, in a subdued voice, stretching out his forefinger and fixing his eyes, as if to impress the trees and shrubs with his sagacity—"I knowed it. Well, let's see what next."

In order that he might see what would come next, he got into the hollow where his friend the snake had been wriggling a while ago, and remained near that edge of it which skirted the road. After a short time he heard voices approaching, and looking out from his hiding-place, was assured that du Lys and Thyrza Knowles were in company and in converse. As they passed, he could distinguish the words of the Captain, who was speaking earnestly and with rather incautious emphasis.

"I protest," urged du Lys, "that I followed your directions most religiously—as much so as if you had been a princess. I should have never thought of troubling you now if I had not been sure that it was the last time I could ever so offend."

Something here from Thyrza in tones too low for Michael to hear.

"Yes, I leave to-morrow," went on du Lys, "and I

hoped that you would not object to say just one more word, before we are parted by thousands of miles. I did not before tell you that I am——”

Michael could hear no more. “Leaving, be hanged!” muttered he. “That’s just the sort of deceits that sprigs of quality use to stir up the feelings of simple girls. I blame myself for this, I do. I should have knowed that such as you be never polite to poor folks except for some crafty game.”

So elated was he to find his suspicions fully justified, that he started off through the thickest of the coppice, thinking to head the pair and witness more of their proceedings. Just inside the gate which separates the coppice from the fields, there is a little area where the brushwood grows but thinly. Michael, spite of his lameness, reached this spot before du Lys and Thyrza, whose path wound a little, and who had not hurried themselves. He could not approach near enough to hear their discourse, or he would have been seen; but he observed their actions pretty closely. He guessed that they had halted here before separating, because Thyrza naturally objected to being in her admirer’s company in the open fields. He observed that du Lys stood at a little distance from her, speaking earnestly for a minute or two. Then du Lys held in his hand, and seemed to be offering to her, a watch, or some round thing that glittered as if it were of

gold, and Thyrza put it back. More than once she rejected it, as Michael saw clearly enough, who commended her in his heart, and called her a sensible, honest lass ; but he afterwards stamped his foot among the undergrowth, and gave utterance to a low groan, as she at last accepted the present, whatever it was. After that, du Lys took Thyrza's hand, held it a moment, and then bent and kissed it. The interview was over ; he turned back along the coppice-path, and Thyrza passed through the gate into the fields, walking with her usual firm, graceful step.

Michael drew a long breath when they parted, and then sent it forth again in something between a growl and a laugh. "Dang it !" he said, "if that isn't prime. Poor folks take a liberty in breathing the same air that they do ; and now here's one of their high and mighties bending of his glorious head and kissing of this here country maiden's hand ! Is their nature changed, then ? No, no," continued Michael, answering his own question ; "'tonly shows what they'll stoop to, to compass any wickedness they intend. 'Tisn't humbleness, bless you ! not a bit of it. It's art, and tempting like the devil."

Michael had heedlessly allowed himself to be instrumental in bringing this trial upon Thyrza ; and he thought it his duty, therefore, to take steps for effecting her escape from it. But he was some time in

deciding what these steps should be. He did not half like speaking to Thyrza herself on the subject; and he moreover doubted whether mere advice would be sufficient to withdraw her from her folly. Some authority ought to be used. But here again was a difficulty, for Mrs Knowles was ill, and probably could not receive him; and besides that, she would be very likely to accept her daughter's representation of the case, and to dismiss him as an impertinent meddler. Michael could write pretty well: should he send Mrs Knowles an anonymous letter putting her on her guard? No, that would never do. They would put the letter among the ashes, and say it came from some wretch who wanted to take away Thyrza's good name. Long did Michael turn the matter in his mind, and once or twice he despaired of helping Thyrza except by a course which would raise the village gossip concerning her — which he by no means intended. At last, before he went home to supper, the bright idea came to him; he saw it all clear. He would go and speak to Master Betwold. Master Betwold was Thyrza's uncle; and being a sensible, hard-headed man, *he* would know how to take care of the girl. That was the move.

Thyrza's uncle Betwold was an auctioneer and land-surveyor; and he resided at Scrone, a town some five miles from Brigend. But he visited Wyde on market-

days, and so picked up a little business in that town. Naturally a kind-hearted man, he was quick-tempered, and not very courteous. Indeed, if Mrs Knowles represented the genteel side of the family, her only brother might be said to sit for its vulgar division. He used, even when a boy, to chafe wickedly at any little restraint imposed, or any little ceremony prescribed, by his mother under the name of politeness ; and it was a favourite joke of his now to rally his sister, who but for him would be a pauper, on her fortunate liking for elegant manners. A coarse, hot-headed man is not likely to be very popular ; but Betwold “got along,” as he called it. He made up many of his quarrels as readily as he fell into them ; yet there were one or two old grudges which never could be healed. In particular, there was an immedicable feud with an attorney named Darke. It had been generated by jealousy. Betwold had suspected Darke of being a favoured suitor, and of some underhand dealing ; and according to his custom, he had avenged himself, rather liberally first, and afterwards found out, upon examination, that he was wrong in both suspicions. But no repentance could win back the regard of the outraged Darke, who remained his persistent enemy, and was able to do him a great deal of mischief. The fair one about whom all the strife occurred married a third person. It was supposed

that Betwold had been much attached to her; for he remained a bachelor, and after her marriage, refrained entirely from the flirtations and admirations for which he had been remarkable before that event. His only apparent remedy for his chagrin was a closer attention to business; but suspicions were in some quarters entertained that he obtained comfort from another source. A shape as of a case-bottle could generally be perceived beneath the left breast of his coat, and an odour of stale spirits pervaded his raiment.

The day following that on which Michael Clipp had made his discoveries in the coppice was market-day at Wyde; and Michael, in pursuance of his resolution, made then a call on Mr Betwold at his office. Mr Betwold's first impulse, when he had heard Michael's story, and while he was yet infected by Michael's suspicion, was to fly at du Lys's throat, and, as he said, shake the life out of him. But calmer ideas prevailed after a while, when he had turned the evidence over and over in his mind. It really did not appear that very much wrong had been done; and it was by no means certain that any wrong had been intended. "The lass," he said, "is a good lass. She's got her cursed follies about fine breeding; but she ha'n't learned the lying and deceit that belong to it. I ought to hear what she'll say before I condemn her."

So Mr Betwold went to Brigend when his business was over at Wyde, and by his visit agreeably surprised Mrs Knowles, who was better now, and not indisposed for a little chat."

"Well, Kate, lass," said Mr Betwold, in his strong provincial accent, "you don't look so washed-out like as you did. How is it? Are you feeling a little brisker than you was ten days ago?"

"Not very brisk, I think, Thomas; but less feeble and less downcast than I was. I've had a weary time."

"It must be that you took a bad cold, now. Folks need to be careful when they get to be as old as you and me. But you're better: that's right. And the summer coming on so nicely, will soon clear away colds. Well, and how's Thyrza? Where is the girl?"

"Oh, Thyrza is not far off. She's only stepped to Mrs Bond's for the milk. She's strong and well, which is a thing to be thankful for, seeing the many cares that are thrown upon her."

"Ay, it's a happy thing. Let's see; Thyrza must be eighteen, or nigh upon it. You'll be losing her soon, Kate, my faith on't. Has she ever a sweetheart, now?"

"No, I think not. Thyrza has plenty of admirers; but there's no persistent lover—and I can't say I'm

sorry for that. Time enough, you know, for love-making after her age."

"Well, if she is waiting, I've nothing to say against that more than you. But they don't all wait; and some of 'em are sly, you know. Now that you're getting stout again, you should keep an eye on the lass. She's a woman now, 'd bless us! and a wondrous fine one, though I say it."

"I don't think," answered Mrs Knowles, smiling, "that Thyrza has any secret from me. I have never the least uneasiness about her."

"That's the cursed conceit that misleads the mothers of half the lasses that get entangled. Their children are not like other people's children—no need of keeping an eye on *them*. And then when they wake up, it's too late; there's mischief—— Ah, Thyrza, girl! I'm main glad to see you. Come and kiss me, then."

"Don't you find mother looking better, uncle?" asked Thyrza, as she escaped from the spirituous odour of the embrace.

"Oh yes. I hope she'll do well now. But she'll require careful looking after. What's she to do when you get married, I wonder?"

"It will be time enough to think of that when such a thing is likely to happen; won't it, mother?"

Thyrza busied herself in dispensing the tea, which she had made before she went out, so that it was now

of the approved strength. Betwold took a cup, that he might not appear unsociable ; and his two relatives enjoyed it as their reward and comfort of the day. They talked a little of various subjects ; but uncle Thomas would continually bring back the conversation to courtship and matrimony, insomuch that Mrs Knowles began to suspect that he proposed to give her a sister-in-law in his old age, and that he was beating about for some convenient occasion of making the announcement of it. At last he said, "Your mother tells me you've a number of lovers, girl."

"No, no ; I said admirers, which is a very different thing."

"Well, admirers. I suppose that's the fashionable way of putting it ; but, for my part, I don't see much difference. And, you know, *I* heard of one that I should think was genteel enough to please the stately part of even *our* family."

"Oh, mother," said Thyrza, promptly, "uncle's heard something about Mr du Lys being so kind to me."

It was a relief to Betwold to find her so frankly naming du Lys before her mother ; and Mrs Knowles now told the whole story of their meeting, and of du Lys having lent Thyrza his horse, which seemed an honest transaction enough, and he acknowledged it to be such.

"Well, well, Thyrza," he said, "he was very kind to you, no doubt; and you couldn't well take it other than kindly. But I doubt not your bright eyes had something to do with his goodwill. However, I'm not to judge him. He was kind. I wouldn't, however, encourage such an acquaintance as that. These great people are no companions for the poor; and now that you're a young woman, unpleasant remarks might be made concerning it."

"I thought it couldn't be right," Thyrza answered; "and when Mr du Lys spoke to me once or twice afterward when I was out, I told him that he mustn't notice me, and make the neighbours talk, but that I was very grateful for the kindness he'd shown me in my distress."

"Good! good!" said Betwold, nodding his head. "That's quite the right feeling, Thyrza,—quite right." Then he began to have some idea of furring Michael Clipp's ears for having disturbed his mind about what was only a very open and innocent affair, when he remembered that Michael's report was of a very recent occurrence, and that Michael had deponed to the acceptance of some gift; whereupon he added, "And did the young man see that you were right, and act as you desired?"

"He did, uncle Thomas. He's a gentleman in everything, and never questioned but that I was right."

“Good again! Then it was a falsehood that I heard of his having walked with you yesterday, and of his giving you a watch to wear? I’m glad of it.”

As he looked at Thyrza now, she turned scarlet all over, neck, cheeks, forehead; but she didn’t drop her eyes before his glance. It was Mrs Knowles who answered first.

“Ay; that, I’m sure, is untrue. Whoever could have said it? It’s too bad.”

“No, mother, it isn’t untrue,” said Thyrza, bravely. “Mr du Lys gave me, not a watch, but a locket, and here it is”—taking from her bosom a very pretty specimen. “I was going to tell you about it, but I couldn’t very well yesterday and to-day.”

“Oh, oh! that’s the way he attends to your directions, and keeps the neighbours from talking,” said Mr Betwold, looking very stern. “Now mark me, my good girl; I don’t believe that you’ve ever done or thought the least harm about this young man—only they’re sly and heartless, are these chiefs of creation, as they think themselves, and would care no more for ruining the good name of one of us than I should for stepping on a worm or brushing a fly off my nose and killing it. Wasn’t everything made for their pleasure? But though they’ll take no care of us, lass, we’re learning to take care of ourselves; and I tell you, my dear Kate, and I tell you, Thyrza, girl, that these doings

must be stopped, even if I have to send you both away from Brigend. But I'm sure that won't be necessary. You're not silly, Kate, though you are a little flighty about people of quality; and you, Thyrza, are truthful and sincere, I'm proud to say. Now I beg of you both that this little sweethearting matter may be brought to an end at once, and this young squire discharged in real earnest, whether he chooses to comply with what's asked of him or not. If he'll take a hint that his company is not desired, well and good. If he won't—why, then, you know you've got friends that'll protect you from intrusion and annoyance.”

Mr Betwold shook his stick in a manner to intimate that his intervention, if he were forced to resort thereto, would be far from benevolent. Mrs Knowles had been rather confounded by Thyrza's possession of the locket, by her confession of this last meeting, and by her brother's excitement, which made her tremble. So she made no reply. Thyrza, however, who had given time for all this heat to explode, answered with self-possession—

“There will be no need of our doing anything to put an end to the affair, uncle, as it is ended already. Mr du Lys has gone away from this neighbourhood, and is going away from England. He is an army officer, which I didn't know till yesterday, and he is going to the war immediately. If we ever see or hear

of him again, it will not be for a long while. It was only because he was going away that he trespassed in following me again. He said he thought he might venture to speak to me once more, just to say good-bye. And as for the locket, I didn't wish to have it, and refused it; but he said it was cruel to reject a little trifle that would make me think of him sometimes when he was away fighting: and he had been very kind to me, and always behaved himself politely; and I hadn't the heart—I daresay I was wrong—but I couldn't say no,—and that's all."

Her voice gave way while she uttered the last words, and a very few tears escaped, but they were soon wiped away. Her mother, reassured by her frank avowal, took heart again, and said she knew well that Thyrza had done nothing but what became her. And Mr Betwold was obliged to confess that he saw nothing to be very angry about, now the truth was out. "Only," said he, "I don't feel satisfied about his going away. I'm main sure he told Thyrza he was going; but they'll tell stories—ay, they'll forswear themselves—to deceive an innocent girl. So we must be on our guard, in case he should turn up again with a cock-and-bull story about changing his plans, eh?"

"I have no doubt," answered Thyrza, "that he has already gone. However, you can easily satisfy yourself, uncle, as to what has become of him. You may

rely upon it, that if there has been deceit in what he told me, I shall never speak to him again."

"Good!" said Mr Betwold; "that sounds hearty, it does. Well, now, I think I may take my leave. You've lightened my heart, you have, Thyrza. Farewell, then—farewell. I shall find you quite like yourself, Kate, when I make my next visit, I hope."

It is true that Betwold's heart was lightened. He had, out of his breast-pocket, fortified himself in advance against an evil issue to his examination; and he now, as soon as he was clear of St Ann's Cottage, intensified his satisfaction from the same source. Like church-bells or cannon, the contents of that pocket could sympathise with joy or grief, triumph or humiliation, or any human emotion, and were unsuitable in no mood of the mind.

CHAPTER III.

AN EPISODE IN THE WAR.

BEFORE the winter of that year, 1854, Captain du Lys, like many another British soldier, had acquired a new set of ideas, sentiments, and habits. A few months of camp-life on active service had driven into the shade, and almost out of thought, tastes, desires, wants, pursuits, which he had thought to be inseparable from himself, necessary to his identity; and had raised in his mind new ambitions, stirred him to new efforts, and accustomed him to a new routine and new privations. He knew, by some testimony which was superior to the facts of his daily life, that he was himself; but he quite wondered at his retaining that certainty—such a weight of evidence was against his doing so. Not to have any time to kill, was a revolution in itself; and to live a life of hard work instead of amusement, was a change not less notable. But, on

the whole, to like the hard life and the hard work, was what, perhaps, astonished most of all.

There had been a good deal of excitement at the beginning of the war—the mustering of armies, the sights of foreign lands, the embarkations and disembarkations, and the sharp actions with which the campaign commenced. Acquaintance had to be made with the horrors as well as the habits of war. Tall fellows knocked over in scores, wounds, exhausting marches, the effects of the cruel elements, were things that were becoming familiar by this time. It was well that there were a few rapid changes at first; because a siege, until its latter operations are arrived at, is very dull warfare. There are some sharp passages (including “the imminent deadly breach”) in more advanced stages, which certainly break the monotony; but the duty in the trenches while the besieger is making his approaches, is tedious and dispiriting.

The unaccountable Balaklava charge, with all its daring and all its slaughter, had passed into history. Its causes and its conduct were still to be wrangled over at home for many a day; but in camp it had been driven from men’s thoughts by later actions. The troops had ceased to imagine by what or by whose blunder so much useless carnage had been occasioned. The great sortie of the 26th October was also a thing of the past, and the most recent achievement was the

critical fight of Inkermann. That wonderful battle was still a favourite theme with the troops. The promotions earned in it were not yet out from England, and expectation was active in regard to it; but the routine-life of the army was settling down into the dull work which has been mentioned.

The winter had arrived. Although some glorious work had been done, little besides glory had been achieved. The object of all our endeavours, the taking of the city, was indefinitely distant; an immense period of weary plodding seemed destined for our troops before that desired result could be attained. The siege went resolutely on. Little by little our works were drawn closer round the fronts attacked; and though our advance was slow, our loss was heavy. It was, therefore, no light resolution which supported the assailants throughout those tedious days. The Guards were taking their share of this wearing work with the other troops, and it is during the formation of the siege approaches about this period that the incidents of the war become connected with this narrative.

One cold night du Lys was in charge of a working-party which was engaged in forming a battery. From the fire of this battery important results were expected. The men were working with a will, not only because of the weather, but also because they were

in a very dangerous position, and because they knew the importance of getting their work rapidly advanced to a stage where tolerable protection would be afforded to the spade and pickaxe men. The enemy's missiles were flying about in rather a random fashion, and did not appear to be directed specially at the embryo battery. But this was not a certain indication that the enemy was unsuspicious of what was going on. He might be trying to lull them into security, and at the same time preparing a sortie which might by a sudden rush drive them from their ground with loss, and then undo rapidly all they had been doing—which might level their banks and fill in their trenches. Such a design, however, if the enemy entertained it, was not unprepared for on our side. Each workman had his rifle slung behind him, and there was a strong guard within hail, charged with the protection of this and other works in progress in the neighbourhood. Any sortie from the place would probably be soon beaten back with loss; but to prevent it from doing some damage at the onset, it would be necessary for the working-parties themselves to be sudden and determined in their own defence till succour could come up.

Du Lys, like many another English officer, was of opinion that the business of himself and his men was to fight. Any duty which might be necessary or

advisable in order to make the fighting effectual, he considered in the light of an imposition. If reasoned with, and told that in certain situations trench-work and other work were as important to the success of the army as fighting, he would answer—

“Very well, then, they should get some sort of hedging and ditching fellows to do it. It isn’t work for smart soldiers.”

Pressed beyond this, and asked from whence the hedging and ditching fellows were to come, and who but soldiers under discipline could be employed in such situations, he would say that that was not his business: the people who arranged these expeditions ought to make proper provision. He was pleased to be very indignant at this kind of duty being required of him, and he would not condescend to learn, even slightly, the principles on which such works were designed. Indeed, his acquaintance with the art of war began and ended with his regimental acquirements. He was prepared to go at anything which he might be ordered to attack, and to fight to the death; that was all that ought to be required of a gentleman. As for study, he didn’t come into the army for that, and didn’t mean to weary himself with it. It must be confessed that he was discreditably and wilfully ignorant of much that it became an officer to know, and of which, in these days, officers

dare not to be ignorant; also, that he rather gloried in his darkness. He had, however, some very pretty fighting instincts which had come down to him from the old du Lys—he could be quick, decided, and destructive. As he was but a subaltern (his rank of captain being merely that which in the Guards is accorded to a lieutenant), and not likely to have very serious responsibility thrown on him, his want of military education was not as yet of great importance to any but himself.

He had, on the night now spoken of, been cautioned that he might be attacked, and he had taken his measures accordingly. Two or three steady fellows were out listening and watching, and he had arranged the signal by which he was to communicate with the guard. When he was visited by the Engineer officer on duty in that part of the works, he was put right as to some minor points in which his workmen had been erring, and instructed a little as to the meaning of the white lines which in many directions were stretched just above the ground between pickets, and of the lath figures, or profiles, which indicated the form which the earth-work was to take; but as the engineer, though an older officer than himself, did not rejoice in the rank of captain, du Lys thought it undignified to listen very attentively. When the visit was over, he seated himself on a bundle of fas-

cines which had been brought up for use in the work, lighted a cigar, and began to grow thoughtful as the strokes of the picks or the scratching of the shovels sounded monotonously on his ear.

As was natural, his fancy, like that of Campbell's dreaming soldier, was ere long far away from the sounds and desolation of war, and basking in the warmth of home and sunshine. His native fields, as they rose to memory's eye, were regarded with a feeling tenderer than they had ever drawn forth before. The old halls in which his childhood and youth had been spent, saturated, as one might say they were, with pride of lineage, how dear now were their furniture and appointments—the arms, the pictures, the relics of so many ages! The forms of fine old warriors, who had made their way to the East when transport was a trifle more difficult than it had become in the nineteenth century, seemed hardly so raised above the fellowship of their descendant as once they had seemed in the sublimity of their antiquity and their renown. He had followed in their footsteps, according to the lights of his age, and might hope some day to stand their peer—another du Lys who had signalled the old line. He recalled the lanes and tracks, and stiles and foot-bridges, of the Vert country—

“Traversed so oft

In life's morning march when his bosom was young.”

And then he thought of the handsome form of poor Thyrza Knowles, as he had seen her lightly but firmly stepping on the dusty road. Thyrza seemed now to belong to another era, another life—so many striking events had happened in the few months that had elapsed since he saw her, and such a change had occurred in his own mind since then.

The image of Thyrza was thrown back into a seemingly great distance of time, and the distance did not fail to give enchantment to the mind's view of it. A soft regret was in his breast when he thought of her—such regret as accompanies the recollection of fair beings over whom the grave has closed. Thyrza was a figure in that far-off sunny landscape which he might never behold again; his soul yearned for it and her. He could see Thyrza's face again, as it was when the smile fled from it on her hearing that he was an officer and going to the wars. He went over the persistent objections which she made to accepting the locket from him, and the difficulty with which he persuaded her to take it. He thought of his own impulsive act (which had astonished him quite as much as it did Michael Clipp), kissing her hand—the hand of a country lass! Had Thyrza the locket still? he wondered. Did she ever think of him as he was now thinking of her? Was it possible that Thyrza ever heard reports from the seat of war, or interested

herself therein if she did hear them. Could she by any chance have learned how honourably his regiment had been mentioned for its conduct at the battle of the Alma? No; what had Thyrza to do with such things? Ere this she had captivated some boor, or possibly some yeoman or small tradesman, and achieved a great step in life. As Michael Clipp had said, he would be a lucky fellow who had got her; but du Lys did not think a lucky fellow of that kind had any business with Thyrza. At any rate, and whatever might have happened to her, it would be pleasant, if ever he should reach home again, to look on her once more, and learn what kind of fortune her face and mien had brought her. He might (it was not impossible) be a soldier of distinction by that——

Du Lys felt a pressure on his arm, and his reverie vanished. One of his watchmen had crept silently in, as he had been ordered to do, and now reported that he had ventured forward in the darkness till he came upon a counter-approach which the enemy had been lately making. While there, he thought that he detected the tramp of an advancing force; but he could not feel certain of this. An accident, however, had made him sure of what was going on. Some of the sortie had fallen over or into an obstacle, and there was a suppressed buzz of inquiry and caution,

and a palpable hurrying of feet, consequent on the interruption.

Not doubting the man's correctness, du Lys communicated at once with the guard of the trenches. He passed the word among his own party for all to stand to their arms, which they did in a twinkling, after throwing down the intrenching tools. Carrying in his hand, not a mace or an axe, as his ancestors would, but a stout sapling, a native of the Vert woods, he sprang to the front, and was soon convinced that the enemy was at hand. He heard him plainly, and indistinctly saw some of his motions.

"Now then," said he, when he saw that the time had come, "don't wait for them. Over the parapet with you, and meet them half-way."

As the Russians were about to make their rush at the work, they were briskly charged with the bayonet, suddenly checked, and, as appeared from sundry ejaculations, greatly surprised. The instinct of the Russian, however, does not prompt him to flee in panic on the first frustration of his stratagem. Without reflecting much what the result may be, he inclines to have a fight. The organised struggle for which he prepared has been rendered abortive by the enemy; but he can at least improve the occasion by a little hand-to-hand practice. The sortie had been taken aback and disordered by the unexpected charge of du Lys's little

band over the parapet. The leaders of it evidently did not know the strength of our force with which they were engaged, and were not ready with directions: but the men, as they recovered their heads, laid about them with a will; and being many times more numerous, they made a stand, of course.

Du Lys made his voice heard now and then in the darkness, to keep his men together. He got within the guard of one or two Russians and made them feel the weight of his stick; but at last he was unlucky, and received a bayonet-wound in the left arm, which made him turn faint. Just at this moment a Russian officer made at him, and for aught du Lys could do might have made him prisoner, or might even have caused him to be numbered with the past heroes of his illustrious house. But the assailant was seen also by another Englishman, who, rushing at him with extended arms, had him instantly fast in an embrace, which effectually diverted his attention from his intended victim. There was a short and sharp tussle. The Russian officer was the more powerful man, but his antagonist seemed quite to know how to conduct the encounter. After one or two changes of grip he began to use his feet in so intelligent a manner that the strength of the other was of little use. Even while the Russian was putting on a pressure fit to crush the Guardsman's frame, his heels went up in

some magical way, and his broad shoulders came flat on the earth with a heavy thud.

“He won’t do no more work to-night,” shouted the victor, in a dialect of English which sounded very hard West.

By this time (only a few minutes had been occupied by the struggle) the guard of the trenches was on the ground. Du Lys was able to make a report to the officer who commanded it, but could take no further part in the contest, which ended in the sortie retiring into their works with considerable loss, and completely disappointed of the object they had in view. This was entirely due to the smartness shown by du Lys and his party. He accordingly received a very favourable report (not his first); but his wound was so disabling, that it was necessary for him to go into the doctor’s hands. He had been taken to his tent in great pain by the same man who had done him such good service by throwing the Russian officer, and who turned out to be the same who had brought him the first intelligence of the sortie being out. It seemed that he had crept out and got within the outer line of the Russian sentries. To do this with the greatest caution possible, he had disencumbered himself of his arms, which he had not time to resume before the whole party was ordered to go forwards. So he kept by the officer, for whom it was well that he did so.

"How did you manage," du Lys asked him, "to turn over that big fellow so neatly?"

"I larned that trick in the wrastlin'-ring afore I ever thought to be a sawjer or heerd of a Rooshan," was the answer. "That was the same hitch, that was, that Rooke turned over Giant Jordan the Devonshire champi'n with, and broke the ribs of 'n. A little science com'th in handy now and then, don't it, sir?"

Private Treworden had thus rendered an especial personal service to his lieutenant, as well as shown himself a discreet and adventurous scout. It need scarcely be added that he soon wore a stripe on his arm, and was put in the way of advancement.

The wound of du Lys proved to be, for some reason or other, intractable and serious. Some injury close to the bone made it necessary that it should for some time be kept from externally healing; and it was so long under treatment, and he suffered so much pain, that by the time it was pronounced to be closing satisfactorily, his general health was much impaired. For its sake, and for the quicker cicatrising of the part, it was recommended by the medical officers that he should leave camp for a time, and go to recruit at one of the convalescent stations on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus. Changes in those days were not long reflected about. A thought,

whether proportioned or disproportioned, got what old Polonius called "his act" very speedily, if it got it at all. On the evening of the same day on which the change of air was recommended, the patient was on board a steam-transport, and *en route* for the Golden Horn.

Though he had been for some time unburdened of duty and responsibility, he did not fairly realise his freedom till he found himself afloat on the waters of the Black Sea. An invalid in camp is fretted by his inaction more than he is refreshed by the rest. He cannot possibly be insensible to what is going on around him: changes of fortune, delays, hindrances,—all contribute to agitate his weakened nerves. No comrade comes to sit awhile beside him, in the interval between duties, who has not his tale of something stirring or something going wrong, which, though intended only to amuse, has the power to harass. But once fairly away from the sounds of war and the constant excitement of the tented field, the soothed mind no longer hinders the body's recovery. The patient begins to enjoy a blessed tranquillity—no small compensation for the long strain that his powers have been undergoing. His thoughts, not engrossed by an overpowering interest, are free to range, and deliciously use their freedom. Incidents of boyhood, familiar faces, home sports and adventures, lately near

and commonplace, have been thrown back into distance by the thrilling experiences of war, and softened down to dear and charming memories. It seems as if a life had been lived since those things were fresh and new.

A volume would not contain the catalogue of du Lys's wandering thoughts as he breathed the salt air, lying on his couch; neither would the knowledge of them all be worth acquiring. But there was one recurring fancy, one remembered form, which visited him, of which it may be profitable to make mention. Poor Thyrza Knowles, the last woman who had impressed his imagination, was constantly present to it. An idle, unmeaning dream it was; but it was peculiarly grateful just now, when he desired to dream rather than to think. He would have been glad to know that Thyrza sometimes remembered the few interviews which they two had had. He would have been so glad if Thyrza could appreciate the great rise which he felt that he had made in the world from the man of mere pleasure and idle sport to a hard-skinned soldier, who had served not without honour, and shared in a work on which nations were content to expend their energies. Then he laughed as he thought that Thyrza would never recognise in the rude figure which he could then present, in patched and thread-bare clothes, weather-beaten and bearded, the (as he

flattered himself) not far from faultless gallant who had noticed her in the past spring. He felt as if he should like to send home to Thyrza some token, it might be something without intrinsic value, just to prove that there was a warrior—well, a warrior, there was no irony in the designation—doing his duty on the Eastern plains, who could find time to think of her,—to blow a kiss, as it were, to her fair fresh cheek, across the seas and lands which separated him from home.

Rather more than twenty-four hours were occupied in the voyage from Balaklava to Constantinople. Du Lys was not the only invalid on board. There was, unfortunately, a stream of sick and wounded continually flowing westward across the Euxine ; and no ship was allowed to make the voyage without taking part of its cargo from the hospitals. In comparison with many of the maimed or emaciated wretches who were his fellow-passengers, du Lys was scarcely to be pitied. With change and rest he was sure to get well, and to return again to the theatre of war : his honourable wound would not long disable him ; while not a few of those on board would pay for their honour with their lives, or their limbs, or their health. A field-officer went down in charge of the disabled, who were as well cared for as possible ; but even on that short voyage several died, and their bodies were committed

to the deep. Du Lys remained on board after arrival in the Bosphorus until the bad cases had been disembarked. He was then conveyed with his baggage to the Asiatic side of the Straits, and furnished with accommodation in one of the hospitals which were there provided for the English.

After having been for a few days confined to his apartment, so that the medical officers could judge of his case, he was declared to be fit to move about and take the air under certain restrictions. The first use he made of his liberty was to seek after some of the invalids who had been lately on shipboard with him. Of some few he heard good accounts, and one or two he was permitted to see; but he was shocked to learn how many, even in the short time that had elapsed since his arrival, had paid the universal debt—some having succumbed under frightful operations, others having been unable to rally from the wounds or diseases with which they had been afflicted. Of those who remained alive, and who were likely eventually to do well, he was, on account of his own enfeebled condition, forbidden to visit several, so hideous were their cases from operations, wounds, or frost-bite.

Sad answers, for the most part, were given to his inquiries concerning officers and men of his own battalion who had preceded him as invalids. Scores of them lay in undistinguished graves close to where he

now stood—scores more had gone home mangled or disease-stricken, to drag out a miserable existence. Here, he perceived, one got a most depressing view of the war; none of the excitement—

“ That for itself can woo the approaching fight,
And turn what some deem danger to delight ”—

but only the melancholy, inevitable results of a campaign, brought together in naked misery.

Even here, however, things were not without something of a brighter aspect to those who could move about and get a change of ideas. The convalescent officers managed among themselves to keep care off a little, and to pass the time without the perpetual vision of a death's-head and cross-bones. There were some Staff officers appointed to take charge of the invalids; and the officer under whose supervision Captain du Lys had the good fortune to be placed, was not altogether inimical to seeing the patients enjoy themselves in what he considered a rational manner. Indeed, so indulgent was this excellent superintendent, that he winked very hard when officers were transgressing restrictions which had been imposed for the sake of their own speedy recovery or of good order. If he exacted anything from them, it was that they should develop a taste for entertaining in a quiet way, and that they should rather incline to drop their money at hazard, whist, or *écarté*. Thus convalescent young

officers deemed it a piece of good fortune to be in this benevolent man's jurisdiction; and their hearts being opened by it, they were much in the habit of practising hospitality toward their kind curator, and of playing with him games of chance in a somewhat negligent manner.

"You're in luck, du Lys," a convalescent acquaintance said to him when he was first allowed to leave his room.

"As how?" inquired he, not recognising anything in his circumstances which seemed a subject for congratulation.

"You're told off to Wiggy Warner's lot."

"Oh, indeed!"

"True, by Jupiter!"

"And who the devil is Wiggy Warner?"

"Not know Wiggy! That certainly argues yourself unknown in this part of the world."

"Relieve me of this sign of obscurity."

"Why, my dear fellow, you know surely that we are all of us, while down here, committed to the care of temporal pastors and masters. Wiggy Warner—that is, you know, Major Warner of the Staff on state occasions—is one of them, and you are of his flock."

"Oh, that's it. Then I suppose I must go and report myself, or pay my respects in some way or other."

"Well, Wiggy isn't particular. If you want to be very punctilious, you may call, certainly. But an invitation to smoke a cigar in the evening will do quite as well. Jovial old fellow. Expects his fees, you know, of course."

"His fees? A Staff officer!"

"Well, du Lys, it must be taken out of you in some way. The doctrine of compensation, the philosophers tell us, extends throughout nature, and beyond it too. You are to enjoy a very lax discipline—to do, in fact, within reasonable limits, whatsoever is right in your own eyes—and in return you will be expected to lose a match at billiards, or to make a rash bet on the odd trick. Nothing ruinous. Wiggy isn't rapacious."

"Ha, ha! I see. I can't do much at billiards" (looking at his arm), "but I can bet. I thought those harpies were all out of the service."

"They will never be out when we are at war. We fancy we get more moral, but we don't. These queer fellows are always lying about somewhere, and they come into light whenever there's a chance."

"I recollect hearing of an old sinner who commanded the Eleventieth Foot in former days, and who expected each of his officers to lose a few points to him every quarter. The species was supposed to have died out with him. But, I say, what amount of tribute will acquit you decently?"

“I put it down at about thirty shillings a-week, and you take your turn at small entertainments besides. Quite worth paying to escape all irksome enforcement of regulation.”

“Quite so. I’ll go and make acquaintance with this benevolent man at once.”

Du Lys’s friend was quite right. Whenever times are a little troublous, and law or discipline is obliged in some degree to relax its vigilance, it is found that poor human nature remains very much what it ever has been. The progress of manners and science may make a difference in the method of operation ; but the fact that many of us are by nature creatures of prey, is proved as plainly in this as in former centuries. When we read of Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph setting off for France with the avowed object of seeking only plunder, we are apt to fancy that a little licence has been used by the poet—that the characters are something too broadly marked. Pistol, we remember, was an ancient—that is, a gentleman by position. But the “divine William,” like Wisdom, is justified of his children. There can be no doubt that companions like Pistol were to be found in our armies when they were on active service ; and as little doubt that, if we were to send forth an expedition to-morrow, some extraordinary specimens of commissioned officers would accompany it without the smallest thought of duty or

fame, but exulting in the belief that the circumstances of the campaign would afford a field for the free exercise of their peculiar talents.

Major Warner, if he had been medically examined before leaving England, would have been pronounced quite unfit for service in the field. Although this truth was neither found nor sought for before the expedition sailed, it was immediately apparent on the commencement of active duties abroad, when it not only had to be mourned that an officer who should have been useful was inefficient, but it had to be considered in what way it was possible to get any, if ever so little, work out of this hard bargain. When the sick began to accumulate, as they soon did, a convenient employment for the old fellow seemed to offer itself. He was one of those told off to look after the invalids — by receiving which appointment he was rescued from the hardships of the battle-field and camp, oppressed by no onerous duty, furnished with comfortable quarters, and enabled to live in a manner much more to his liking than any that he could possibly have adopted at home. In regard to our enemies the Russians, Major Warner must have felt much as Falstaff did towards the rebels. “I laud them; I praise them.” They had been the means of creating for him the very place which he liked—with much of the licence of the camp without its priva-

tions; no superior very near to exact a rigid account of his stewardship; a flock whose forced inactivity, and whose want of any useful occupation, made them peculiarly prone to fall into his habits; and opportunities of lining his pockets while following amusement.

CHAPTER IV.

CONVALESCENCE—A ROMANCE OF HUMBLE LIFE.

MAJOR WARNER was not to be found at his office, which had in it two clerks, whose possible occupation was a subject of conjecture and discussion to many a sick soldier who was hard up for something to think about; neither was he at his residence, which had in it (the world said) nothing but a bottle of brandy and a medicine-phial. Du Lys's invitation, however, found him somehow; he accepted it very politely, and made his appearance among the host's other friends with punctuality. He greeted du Lys with placid kindness, and said he hoped his stay there would be comfortable; then he mildly and briefly recognised the rest of the company, and subsiding into a seat, drew a cigar from a box on the table and began to smoke.

Du Lys noticed that he wore a very rich peruke; also that he exhibited some brilliantly white teeth. It

was not until afterwards that he learned how Wiggy's eyes were made of composition, and how his nose had, not very long since, been formed by the doctors, who turned down the skin of his forehead over a whale-bone framework; also that he breathed through a metal pipe, and digested by means of a patent apparatus, which would have to be sent home for repair if it should happen to get out of order. Indeed there were some who maintained that his whole person had been artificially renewed in repairs which were necessary from time to time, and that in regard to some parts of him this renovation had taken place more than once; but these were probably exaggerations. Certainly, sufficient planking had not been removed at any one time to extinguish life or to destroy identity. A profane convalescent was once heard to remark on this reported regeneration, that it was only transmigration with a difference—instead of the soul going to a new body, a new body had been brought to the old soul.

By way of banishing the lugubrious associations of the place for a time, the company talked about the deaths of officers, past and probable, and followed very closely the stream of promotion which would flow from each vacancy. Major Warner knew the Army List from beginning to end; and being, in consequence, frequently appealed to as to the effects of the deaths under discussion, he had to withdraw his cigar from his lips to

declare the direct successions to regimental vacancies, and to give his opinion, supported by precedents, of the manner in which certain appointments would be filled. It is scarcely possible that he can have nourished even the slightest idea of his getting anything better than he at present enjoyed—indeed most people regarded him as singularly favoured in being allowed to hold that—yet he was evidently as much occupied with thoughts of promotion as if he had a reasonable expectation of being one day the recipient of the highest military appointment.

“How was Pegginton looking when you came away, du Lys?” asked a young man who had been some time recovering from a very severe wound.

“Hadn’t seen him for some time. You know I was shut up myself many days before I left. I think I remember that he was on the sick list a month ago, and little Jayes doing the duty.”

“Ah—just so. He’ll never be able to hold that appointment. Requires a man of iron, you know. A little more hard weather and other hardship, and he’ll have to give in: see if he doesn’t.”

Then the appointment began to be warmly discussed.

“Jayes will never do to take that berth: worse than Pegginton,” observed one.

“No, bless you, he can’t do it,” put in another.

"I say Greaves will get that if it's vacant. He's a smart fellow, and has got a good many friends among the Staff."

"Pshaw! he hasn't a chance."

"By Jove, I think differently!"

"Bet you five pounds he doesn't get it when it's vacant."

"Done with you! I feel quite certain about it. What say you, Brown?"

"Devilish hard to say. You know Martin has had nothing since they did away with his appointment. He'll expect it."

"Yes, perhaps," from many voices.

"Major, who'll get Pegginton's place?"

"I suspect the people at home will fill it up."

"Well, if they do, they must give it to some fellow who has experience in that line."

"Doesn't follow."

"Well, hang it, they must have some regard——"

"Stop a minute," said the Major. "Let us see how the former things in that department have been given. Rattray, Downes, and White, all named from home, without the smallest qualification."

"By Jove, that's true!" from all.

"Then who do you say will get it, Major?" asked he who originally started the subject.

"Well, I should say Slim."

"Slim! What! that miserable fellow. As how?"

"You see, he's a first cousin once removed of old Nepot, who's sure to take care of him. I don't mean to offer a bet; but mark my words, if Pegginton makes a vacancy, he'll get it."

* "Infernal shame! And then, by Jove, if Peggy goes clean out, you know, as he probably will, there'll be a regimental step too!"

"Yes," answered Major Warner, "that will be a nice thing for Grampus, who's snug in England, working on some committee. He'll have to come out if he's promoted. Black'll get the company, and Green the lieutenancy."

The Major's opinion carrying with it conviction to all, it now became a question between the two who had betted whether the bet could stand, as an entirely new candidate not mentioned by either disputant had been favoured by the Major. They could not quite remember at first what it was that they had respectively maintained; but a reference to the early stages of the debate seemed at last to satisfy the whole company that Greaves had been backed absolutely to succeed Pegginton.

Conversation and public affairs having had their turn, the inclination of the company seemed now to be towards amusement, and the proposal of a round game was very favourably received. Effervescent

waters and brandy afforded refreshment. Most guests took them mixed, but one or two practical men who had learned to distinguish the realities of life from its illusions (among these was Major Warner) imbibed the undiluted spirit. Under the influence of the latter, Wiggy Warner's stiffened faculties gradually thawed; and instead of remaining reticent until his opinions were called for, he waxed eloquent as to the laws of the game, the principles upon which those laws were founded, and passages in the lives of eminent men who had excelled in playing it. Many of these had closed their useful careers so long ago that they would have been totally unknown to the present generation had not the voice of surviving friendship thus awaked the echoes of their fame.

Somewhere in the small hours of the morning the devoted superintendent arose, with much difficulty and after two or three unsuccessful attempts, from his chair, lighted a fresh weed, and then took an affectionate leave of his host. He then kindly made it known that if any of the invalids happened to require support in walking home he would be happy to give it, as probably all the orderlies and servants were in bed. And upon this announcement a stout fellow, who was now quite well of a wound in the hand, and going back to the front in a day or two, said that he should be thankful for an arm, and, under the pious fiction

that he was being escorted, took the venerable Major under his arm, and saw him safe to the door of his quarters.

Du Lys passed his time chiefly in mooning about the post and hospitals by day, visiting the fresh batches of invalids who were coming continually down from the front and hearing the news from them, and attending the embarkations of those who were returning to duty or going home. By night he usually attended a *séance* differing very little in character from that which has been described. He soon got very tired of his invalid's life, and longed to be back again at his active duty. But he had undergone a considerable strain, of which his wound was not the sole cause, though it was the immediate cause of forcing attention to it. The undoubtedly hard life in camp had worn him more than he had been aware of before he got hurt. And thus, although he was certainly recovering, the recovery was at first tedious.

By degrees he regained tone so far as to be permitted to see more of the serious cases in hospital. This, though anything but a gratifying privilege, at least afforded him the satisfaction of showing a little sympathy with poor creatures whose fortune had been far worse than his own. Many a man who had been sound and strong on the night when he got his wound was here now, dying or frightfully wounded. Their

sufferings must have been fearful, both of body and mind. Reckless as they often seem when full of vigour and constantly occupied, the thought of dying miserably in a foreign land, far from friends and the gentle offices which make the bed of sickness or of death tolerable at home, is as bitter to them as to the most refined. Yet it was remarkable how little there was of complaint or wail. The poor fellows bore the inevitable like Stoics. Their heroism seems to have been of the same kind as that which we have lately heard ascribed to the patient Turks in circumstances still more horrible. One almost imagines that the air of that region must nerve men to endurance.

Hard, however, as was the fate of many of our Crimean wounded, it would have been worse than it was had not so many kind and charitable female hearts devoted themselves to the services of the hospitals. Many a bodily pang was relieved, many a sorrow was softened, peace was brought to many a deathbed, by the angelic services of that good sisterhood. Their works would follow them all. There was a small detachment of these ladies in the hospital of which du Lys was a patient. He was a witness of their most material influence. And yet, with all that their kindness could do, there were cases there pitiful enough to rend the hearts of hardy, rough warriors. Little confidences, little commissions given to him by

the suffering of his own regiment, showed du Lys that his presence in the establishment, useless as he might before have thought that he would be there, was not without its happy effect.

The burial, the office which had to be performed for so many of the patients, was sad, and even shocking. Officers were coffined after a fashion, and each had his grave, the place of which was marked by some rude, frail memorial, calculated to last a month or two. But the rank and file, sewn into blankets, were carried off wholesale on carts, and packed in long trenches and huge pits, like herrings in a barrel. The deadliest foes or the dearest friends might be, in this miscellaneous and wholesale sepulture, not divided. Where any particular body might lie was, a month after its burial, a secret that could never be penetrated until the day when these pits, like all tombs, and the sea, and death, and hell, shall give up the dead that is in them. Not much like warriors taking their rest, our brave countrymen lie inhumed on the shore of that classic sea: they may envy, if departed spirits can envy aught, the narrow cells in which the rude forefathers of their native hamlets sleep.

One day, on entering a ward, du Lys's regard was attracted by an emaciated face, lying back motionless on a pillow, the features of which excited some hazy

kind of recollection which would not take definite shape. If it were simply a resemblance that struck him, he could not tell where he had seen the first cast of face after which this patient's had been moulded ; if he had looked on this very head before, no circumstance of time, place, or action came back to help identification. An emotion only, some vague impression of the countenance before him being connected with danger and excitement, came in place of a tangible recollection. "Who the deuce can this be?" he said to himself. "The poor fellow, or somebody like him, has been at some time or other of my life not indifferent to me." Still he mused. He would not disturb the wasted being who lay either asleep or in a state of exhaustion ; but he caught the number of the bed, and went away to the superintendent's office to see and discover who occupied it.

"87, sir?" said the clerk to whom he spoke. "Let us see. 85, 86—ah, here it is ; 87, Private Dutton, 11th Hussars."

"Ah, then I was mistaken. I thought I knew the face ; but I know nothing at all of Private Dutton. Thank you."

"One minute, sir, please. I rather fancy Dutton died under amputation a day or two since. Yes, here's the report. Then the roll can't have been corrected." Then, pulling a paper off a file behind him, "Here's

the morning return: we shall get it here. 87—87—I don't see it. Ah, Corporal Treworden of the Guards."

"By heaven it is!" exclaimed du Lys, "and what a wreck! Poor, poor fellow!"

But these dreadful changes were only too easily comprehended; he divined how the stalwart wrestler had been reduced to the shadow of himself. This was the man who had saved his life, who had been largely instrumental in making for him the beginning of a reputation. Horrible indeed! but only one among thousands of horrors. This horror touched himself a little more nearly than others did—that was all. Moralising on such subjects had been done over and over again. There was now only the shock of first receiving the intelligence; then immediately came the acceptance of the truth, and the consideration of whether it were possible in any way to mitigate the suffering of the patient. Treworden had been sent down from the front sadly torn by the fragment of a shell. The doctors in hospital had come to the conclusion that his life might possibly be saved by a harrowing operation. He had submitted to this about two hours before du Lys first saw him; had then been put into the vacant bed 87; and had lain ever since quite tranquil, but in a state of exhaustion. If only his strength should hold out for a few days, the operators felt that

they had saved his life. But for him there would be no more of "the plumed troop and the big wars." He got his life for a prey, as the Scripture has it ; but his occupation was for ever gone. A career had seemed to be opening to him ; he had been noticed and promoted for his behaviour in du Lys's brush, and again noticed and promoted since that. But the third day had come a chilling frost and nipped his root. After being out on reconnoitring duty for a couple of hours, and having escaped the hot fire of rifle-pits in front, he had been struck in the advanced trenches by a fragment of a shell which hurt nobody but himself, and seemed to have him for its billet. They were hopeless of him in camp ; but thought that possibly he might have enough of strength left to bear the voyage to the Bosphorus. And so he had come down, his iron frame keeping death at a distance as he crossed the sea, and gathering up strength for the trial through which he was to pass. He had been in a dark and cheerless ward at first ; but Dutton's death enabled them to transfer him to bed 87, in a bright airy situation.

Greatly and unusually was du Lys moved on first taking this unfortunate fellow's hand, when permitted to speak to him. It was the first time in his life that he had realised a brotherhood with a man of the toiling classes. He had not been without a benevolent

feeling towards these classes generally ; he was not among those who think uncharitably of the rude and ignorant ; he would have opened his hand wide to any needy peasant. But relations with such were maintained across a great gulf, as he understood the matter ; his bounty flowed over the barrier into an obscure region, in the natural history of which he was less perfect than in that of many soulless beings. To-day he knew that between Treworden and him there was a tie, different in kind, but as strong as those which bound him to those of his own line. It was not compassionate condescension that he felt for the man who had shared his peril and stood by him in the death-struggle. It was fellowship, confidence, affection. He could look upon this maimed soldier as his friend, in a more liberal sense than upon most of those equals whom he called friends. Here was a friend who had stuck closer than a brother.

Treworden did not long waver between life and death. His fine constitution and his firm mind pulled him through. He took from the kind lady who nursed him all the medicine and nourishment which the doctors ordered, and submitted implicitly and patiently to every prescription, however painful, regarding his wound. Almost every hope in life was gone for him : he could have welcomed death ; but if life was decreed for him, he accepted life. As by slow

degrees the strength was wooed back to his frame, du Lys was more and more at his bedside, aiding, comforting, as far as he knew how; but more than these, finding a sad pleasure in the society of a man who had shown, while he was well and strong, and was now showing every day, a courage and a constancy such as no old du Lys, in his panoply of steel, could have shown in a higher degree. Little qualified as was du Lys to

“Minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet, oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff’d bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart”—

yet his genuine sympathy and goodwill were in themselves a comfort. They talked like friends and brothers of the chapter of warfare which they had seen together, and of the achievements of their battalion and of particular comrades; and they discussed the fresh news which arrived almost every day from the front. It was impossible but that du Lys should contrast the wounded corporal’s true, genuine, soldier’s view of events, with the selfish speculation to which every incident gave rise in Wiggy Warner’s flock of officers. He did not imagine that all these officers felt as selfishly as they spoke—no doubt he would have wronged them if he had thought so; but at any rate, not one of them

chose to express a noble or patriotic feeling, while a thought for the nation's glory was always the first that sprang to Treworden's lips.

"Ah! that was well done, sir, wasn't it?" he would say, on hearing of some regimental episode; "that's a real soldier—I know him. He'll be a honour to the regiment some of these days, if—if," he would add, with a sickly smile, "some unlucky bit of a shell doesn't sweep a little too near him."

He wanted only the deserving to get on.

"It'll be the death of father, I'm afeared," said Treworden one day, "to see me come back such a misshapen helpless object. He was always proud of me, was poor father."

This was sadly uttered on the day when it was definitely announced that the doctors considered his life safe, and that he might soon be embarked for England—of course to be discharged on a pension, and to make what he could of his gloomy future. His father, it appeared, was a yeoman of small means, working a very little farm in a parish near Truro. He spoke of his father as having been a stout, hearty man for his age; and on this, du Lys endeavoured to persuade him that the old man, though no doubt he would be greatly shocked, would not necessarily give way to grief at what had befallen. It was far more likely that his father and all his relations would nerve them-

selves to exertions that they might render the patient's life as comfortable as possible.

"You know, there was a little quarrel—no, it wasn't a quarrel, but a little unpleasantness about my listing, sir. They was willing to have paid the smart when they knowed what I'd done. But I was wilful, and they took on, and there was some words. All was smooth again, though, before I come away. They wouldn't let me go to far-away dangers without forgiving all round. And father, he blessed me afore I come away. I couldn't a faced the wars without that."

"You were born for a soldier, then," du Lys answered. "No consideration could keep you away from the army. Friends remonstrate in vain when that is the case."

"For certain, sir, I was born for a sawjer, and an unfortunate one. But I don't know that I was ever so mad after the drum and fife as to fly in the faces of all my belongings to take the shilling. No, 'twasn't that; 'twas a bit o' temper. They didn't know at the time, bless 'em, but 'twas rivalry and temper."

The explanation of this last remark came out in fragments which, to save time, had better here be tacked together. It seems that there was, in a dress-maker's or milliner's workroom in Truro, a young woman named Charlotte Climo, a native of the neighbourhood, but whose mother had been a stranger in Cornwall;

so that, besides her home-born relations, Charlotte had many who were of another county—or, as they were there called, “up-the-country” people. Charlotte was a well-favoured girl, modest and well-behaved; and as her calling did not require from her any dirty work, and as she had some taste in dress, she appeared to be of better condition than the rest of her family, who looked rough enough on working days.

An accident brought young Treworden and Charlotte Climo into company, and the girl’s quiet manner and sensible conversation (by which she was distinguished from most of her companions) made a great impression on the young man. The silly fellow thought Charlotte much above him in the world, which was altogether a mistake; for although he worked hard all the week, and was not very gaily clad, save on Sundays and holidays, his father was more substantial and of more account than any of Charlotte’s relations. Treworden, as well as being a hearty, honest fellow, was an exceedingly fine young man, strong, active, and courageous. He was famed as a wrestler; and if he had been idle enough to have attended the games far and near, he might, it was thought, have taken high honours in the ring.

Charlotte was a rather reserved young woman, and whatever she may have felt about Treworden’s admiration, did not allow her feelings to be read; or, what

is just as probable, Treworden's very humble opinion of himself made him fancy that Charlotte thought but little of him. If he was discouraged, he was not sufficiently so to refrain from paying her attention; and so, as they were both young, there seemed to be time enough for the affair to grow more serious hereafter—at present it did very well as it was.

But the course of true love! one remembers. Ah yes; this case was no exception to the rule. Trouble would, no doubt, have come out of the ground to them, if there had been no alternative; but there was an alternative, and the name of the alternative was Richard Cayley. The present residence of the alternative was Pendennis Castle, near Falmouth, and the alternative was of the profession of arms, he being a full private in a marching regiment, of which two companies were detached to the station mentioned.

Now Richard Cayley was, in some degree or other, a cousin of Charlotte Climo. He could read and write; not, certainly, after the manner of a proficient, but well enough to scratch out some sort of communication with his friends in the north. These friends reminded him that he had relatives at Truro of the name of Climo; and the only notice that Private Cayley took of the reminder was to remark, that his Climo kindred might go not to Paradise for anything he cared. But in a very few weeks from the day on which he gave this

permission, he rejoiced exceedingly that all his cousins had not too eagerly availed themselves of it. There was a great water *fête* got up one summer's day by Truro and Falmouth combined, and Cayley and some comrades went up to a point of land near to Tregothnan to witness a boat-race in which some officers of his regiment were to pull. On this point was collected a large and gay crowd, and in the crowd was a young woman whom it pleased Private Cayley to call a peculiarly pretty girl. Let it be explained that he did not use the word "peculiarly," which was not in his vocabulary, but it will do by way of translation. Nor is a translation of his words so supererogatory as it may at first appear; for he never used but two adverbs, which two served to qualify all ideas whatsoever. How, then, without a glossary, could the uninitiated understand the force of either adverb in any particular connection in which it might be found?

The peculiarly pretty girl turned out to be Miss Climo; and now a great yearning seized Richard Cayley to hold sweet converse with his kith and kin—"his own flesh and blood, by ——." Charlotte's father was on the ground, and Private Cayley having ascertained that such was the case, and where Mr Climo stood, gently revealed himself to that kinsman, and demanded in right of his descent that they two should

crush a pot of porter together. And it was so, the man of war "standing" the refreshment.

This was the beginning of the rather intimate footing on which Private Cayley for some time was received in the house of Climo. He used to come up to Truro whenever he could get leave—which would be generally on Saturday or Sunday. He was therefore frequently in the house when Charlotte was free from her work; and he, as a matter of course, attended her at home and in her walks,—and he very sorely disturbed the peace of young Treworden. He was a swaggering scamp, with a great deal to say, and liberal, so far as his means went. He could not be said to make love to Charlotte; but he managed to monopolise her whenever he was at the house, and to make Treworden feel that he (Cayley) had the first claim on her. Charlotte, reticent and retiring, allowed herself to be appropriated by the more impudent of her admirers, and made no sign by which the state of her feelings could be divined.

It was not easy to quarrel with Cayley about his pretensions; he was a relation, and a visitor at the house. Neither was it easy to quarrel with him at all; for, saucy, presuming dog as he was, he was not ill-natured nor ill-tempered. Had it come to a row, Treworden, by treating his rival to what is called the "Cornish hug," could have damaged the

symmetry of his competitor's ribs, or he could have pugilistically administered to him in a manner that might have cooled his passion, or, at any rate, diminished his confidence. But Treworden was rather inclined to admit the right by which the private enjoyed some of his advantages; and he was not so much incensed against Cayley, who was only acting as was natural to him, as against Charlotte, who, in the Cornishman's opinion, rather encouraged this bold pretender. He had expected better things of Charlotte: he did not think she could have been amused by such a coarse companion, and he did think that she would have had consideration enough for himself not to have let him feel aggrieved by any privilege which she might feel obliged to concede to Cayley in right of blood.

Charlotte, however, did not seem to feel that she owed any compensation to Treworden for her tolerance of Cayley. When the young yeoman, sometimes in the bitterness of his disappointment, ventured to speak disparagingly of the swaggering *militaire*, she inclined to take his part; and, more than this, she sometimes volunteered remarks indicating that she rather admired the military dash and general character, and that she was beginning to appreciate, and to regard with interest, the incidents of a soldier's life.

Rightly or wrongly, Treworden had soon worked himself into a state of desperation. He wondered whether, if *he* wore a red coat, Charlotte would then think him worth a little more consideration. And this wondering was not altogether a suggestion of his own morbid fancy. As frequently happens, there was at hand a tempter who seemed to have been placed there just to strengthen and to make use of the young man's feelings in his time of trouble. A gallant sergeant, who was recruiting for the Guards in Truro, had cast covetous glances on Treworden's stalwart person, and had desired to secure him for her Majesty's service. He had made attempts to speak to Treworden, but had been repelled somewhat contemptuously. The sergeant, however, who had some experience of the world, did not resent Treworden's *hauteur*, nor cease to keep up a bowing acquaintance with him. He knew from experience that many a man who thinks himself insulted the first time he is asked to enlist, gets familiarised to the idea, and ends by taking the shilling. So he bided his time.

And the time came. Treworden became a little more gracious to the sergeant. He thought he was very cunning; but the sergeant had mentally pricked up his ears the moment the other's manner changed, and congratulated himself on having hooked his fish,

though in his bearing there appeared not the slightest consciousness of success. When he now made a little recommendation of his profession, he showed no ire at Treworden's scoffing answer; but he noted that the answer was somewhat different from what it had been before. For, said Treworden, in contempt of the half-joking proposal that he should mount the cockade, "You don't fancy that I could be caught exhibiting myself in imitation of that swaggering scamp who comes to Mr Climo's?"

"Jealous, by—well, by yea and nay," was the sergeant's mental exclamation on this. But the sergeant's spoken answer was—"Heaven forbid, sir, that you should do such a thing, or that I should ask you to do it! You surely don't fancy that anybody that *I* would enlist could ever look such a slouching, slovenly, swaggering blackguard as the person you have mentioned? No, sir; I am proposing to you to come into the perfession of a gentleman—a perfession, recklict, that such a half-grown scamp as that could not be received in. I am proposing to you to enter a service in which your manly height, your fine limbs, and your good carriage would be shown to the best advantage—where you would be dressed like a gentleman, and live among gentlemen; and as for your success with the ladies—well, by yea and nay, I'll say nothing about

your success with the ladies. That scamp, indeed!" And the sergeant uttered a laugh charged with as much scorn as it is possible for an expression of that kind to contain.

The whole of the speech went to the mark. It was in Treworden's power to outshine Cayley in his own line; to harrow Charlotte's feelings, if she had any; and, at any rate, to bury his own blighted being in a reckless career. These were only thoughts at first; but the poison worked persistently, and as injury after injury was (as he thought) done to him, his resolution gathered to a head. It was one Monday morning, following an evening on which Cayley had been more than usually presumptuous, and Charlotte more than usually cold, that he declared himself ready and willing to serve her Majesty.

Charlotte knew nothing of what had happened until the enlistment was irrevocable; but Treworden, that same Monday night, made known in his father's house what he had done, and created there such a consternation as had never before been known. His old father, and the whole family, after giving way to their first burst of astonishment and grief, expostulated with him throughout the night, urging that the smart-money should be paid, and a release obtained from what they insisted on calling a hasty and a rash engagement. Treworden knew that, whether his action might have

been prudent or not, it certainly was deliberate. The grief of his family was hard to bear ; but he had considered everything before, and would stand the hazard of the die. His father accompanied him to the magistrate's room where he was finally admitted to the service, hoping to the last that he might prevail to overcome his son's resolution. This could not be done, and the enlistment was ratified—the recruit being informed that he would have to proceed to London in about a fortnight.

Now came the communication to Charlotte Climo of what had taken place. The girl could not at first realise the fact, and answered somewhat at random ; whereupon her lover, with bitterness, began to remark that he had at any rate chosen a respectable branch of the service, and hadn't quite reduced himself to the level of the idle vagabonds whom one saw sloping about county towns. During his speech the girl began to appreciate the situation, and at the end of it she said, with a wild look—

“Do you mean to tell me that you have gone and enlisted for a soldier?”

“I do,” said he. “That is exactly what I have done.”

“Oh, how could you—how could you?” she exclaimed, turning pale, and losing for a moment the power of speaking farther.

"Why, I thought you admired the red coats," answered he, rather less savagely than he had been speaking.

"And you will have to go from home?"

"Without doubt. I shall go to London at the end of next week, and then, perhaps, to the wars—who knows? They say there's going to be war."

Charlotte, perceiving that this speech was intended to wound her, controlled herself, and began to speak of the matter with less emotion, though still with interest. She indeed, up to the day of his departure, showed more firmness than he did; for he was, towards the end of his stay, deeply moved more than once. But Charlotte was piqued at his thus separating himself from his home and his friends, and stood it out.

Only once again did Cayley and Treworden meet. On that occasion the linesman was a little disposed to be patronising, and to "come the old soldier" over the other. But Treworden tried to "shut him up" very quietly by remarking, that probably Cayley's experience would be of no use to a man going to serve in the Guards—which regiments, as he understood, had customs and a position different from the army at large. On a second occasion, when Private Cayley ventured to say, in reference to something which Treworden was engaged in—"Ah, my

boy, you'll have to do it this way, now: you're in the service, you know, now," the other said, "That may be the way with you, but it's likely I may find it otherwise where I'm going." To which Cayley responded—"Damme, it must be the way everywhere where they're not fools; but no matter for that, there's one way which all jolly fellows go. Let's have a glass of grog together, or two, if you like, damme."

Charlotte made no sign at parting. Treworden's friends, really almost heart-broken, thought they were angry with him for causing so much misery, and would not condone his offence.

He had been in London only long enough to get through his drills when war became imminent, and the probability that the Guards would embark for foreign service great. At this time he obtained a short furlough to go down to the west and see his friends.

His sweetheart had been sorely tried by his absence. When he came back in his uniform, she did not fail to perceive the difference between him and her cousin Cayley; and the difference was not in appearance only. He had parted with some of his rustic simplicity, without becoming presumptuous or in any way offensive. Private Cayley was no longer in Cornwall. His detachment had been relieved, and

the regiment, like most available ones, was holding itself ready to embark for the East. It was an anxious time, and brought to the surface a vast amount of feeling, which otherwise it might have taken a long time to draw from the depths of hearts. Charlotte confessed, and wept, and said she didn't know whether there was more of joy or sorrow in her fate; but it *was* her fate, and she would bear herself "according."

Thus had ended the first act of the romance. And thus, as the poor fellow now thought, had ended the whole sad story.

It was not an unnatural result of the telling of Treworden's love-story, that it should give a prominence in du Lys's now saddened mind to the recollection which was always there, more or less tender, of Thyrza Knowles. He used to muse on Thyrza, and to desire to send her some message or token of his regard. It came into his mind that Treworden would be the very person to serve him in this matter, and to be the bearer and transmitter of some trifling present to the girl. He was allowed by this time to go about without much restriction; and, Treworden having asked him to make a few small purchases which were to be taken home as presents to his relations, he determined to cross to Constantinople for the purpose of doing so, and at the same time to pro-

cure a gift for Thyrsa. Treworden was going to take home a Turkish lady's dress and veil, and some small *souvenirs* made of Turkish wood; also a photograph of the hospital where he was then lying. These did very well, as he himself would be the bearer, and as he would have his little story to tell about each; but they would be unmeaning to send as du Lys proposed to send his gift. It was easy to see this; but it was not so easy to judge what would be the proper present. Long did du Lys consider the matter, without being able to decide on anything that seemed exactly to suit the case. At last, rather because the time of his stay was expiring than because he was exactly satisfied with his acquisition, he purchased some pairs of Turkish embroidered slippers, and a gold necklace or two, with crescents and rings and daggers depending therefrom. They would be of very little use to a poor village girl, but she might store them for his sake if she liked; and he really did not know what more useful thing (if it was to be a *souvenir* of the East) he could send her.

This visit to Constantinople was, in truth, the beginning of the end of du Lys's convalescence. The time was not far off when he would be sufficiently restored to return to his duty before Sebastopol. His hospital and its surroundings were becoming tedious enough. Poor Treworden, the person who most inter-

ested him of all at the invalid depot, was rapidly becoming well enough for his voyage, and would very shortly be embarking for England. It would be an immense relief to get back to work again. Unfortunately, there were plenty of men arriving to keep up—indeed to add to—the strength of the little society. He had ceased to be amused even with Wiggy Warner, although it had been a little study to understand the old fellow's character, and get some impress of him, that he might laugh over in happier days of the future. Warner, he perceived, like another noted soldier, held Epicurus strong. The veteran was, however, discreet enough to be very soldier-like in the presence of real soldiers; and he had, for occasional use, a stock of high-minded sentiments, which he aired very cleverly, not as if wishing to display them, but as if they were the natural, unpremeditated expressions of a reticent but altogether rightly toned mind. If his chance and sparing remarks were so much to the purpose, how much, one might think, must the whole bent of his mind be in the right direction! Wiggy and Corporal Nym had caught something of the same idea regarding imposture. It must be confessed, however, that with men at all disposed to be friendly with him, the Major at once put aside his highest walk of acting; would hardly care to conceal his disbelief in, and contempt of,

glory and patriotism, "and all that sort of thing;" and would even own to a conviction that the little joy which this world contained was to be found in a good cigar, and pure brandy a little over-proof.

It was du Lys's belief that the Major had dabbled in vices of very many descriptions, but always in a rather gross and low way. This was, however, chiefly caused by the narrowness of his means. There was no evidence to show that he would not have been brilliantly and elegantly vicious if he could. Indeed he tried to persuade his hearers that he had been so; but a man like du Lys could correct, by means of the internal evidence of his conversation, the ambitious claims of his utterance. Wiggy soon let you know that he had not been led captive by the last infirmity of noble minds; and if he found you a safe confidant, he was not long after that in possessing you of some passages in his relations with Amaryllis and Neæra, which, ten to one, you would accept less implicitly than you do the Scriptures. On certain subjects Warner possessed a great deal of not very useful information. Du Lys was at first unable to define satisfactorily the range of his mental ken; but he finally decided that it included nothing beyond the ordinary matter of military and sporting and contra-band newspapers.

When Wiggy Warner had been seen in his ordinary

character and without his mask, his whole man had not yet been discovered. There were rare occasions when he tried to persuade you that his usual daily stage, run in the part of an Epicurean, or perhaps more properly of a Silenus, was itself but a false life,—a numbing process, under which were hid and repressed tragic recollections, rooted sorrows, buried hopes, which the real Major Warner, latent beneath the sensual exterior, bore evermore a secret burden on his great mind. When thus disposed, he would darkly hint at having been a husband and a father, and at having done the State some service—at having then known what it was to find the wife of his bosom haggard, his offspring unnatural, and his sovereign ungrateful. What wonder if, pierced by so many darts, he sought forgetfulness—all he could now aim at—in society and in frivolous pastime? But a short time more of this career, and then the grave would close over his frailties and his miseries!

Of course those who had only heard of these sorrows of Warner were anxious to witness an unbosoming. But it was an exceedingly difficult and uncertain operation to make that branch of the tree bear fruit. The ordinary process of digging about it, and so on, was of no use at all; or, to drop the figure, no amount of alcohol, exhibited in the ordinary manner, could be relied on to produce the tragic revelations. Curious

observers had thought that by managing his moods—that is to say, administering his refreshment in a particular order—the supreme stage might at last be produced; but this was probably but a fanciful idea, and of too strong a resemblance to the theories about rotation of crops in agriculture to find space for its discussion here.

Now and then du Lys heard the veteran Major spoken of as “The Four Seas,” and marvelled what could be the meaning of this *sobriquet*; and he sometimes discussed with other patients its possible origin, as it must have had its aptitude at some period. Our sea-girt isle, as related to Wiggy Warner, was generally supposed to be the foundation of the name; but what the connection was which suggested it there was no evidence to show. Furthermore, Wiggy was itself a nickname; and it was an argument of some weight that, considering the obscurity of the other nickname, and that the Major was already sufficiently distinguished, there was no call for another appellation, especially if there should be no point in it. And the only answer to this possessing the smallest force whatever was, that the epithet “Wiggy,” from immemorial custom and universal practice, had become more a proper name than any inheritance could be, or any invention of godfathers and godmothers; that the owner of it stood, in this respect, on the same ground

as the Black Prince or Cagliostro : consequently, that he was entirely in a position to receive an agnomen in the same manner as, in some languages, an epithet which has already reached the superlative degree of comparison is ready to start away and be compared again. Whatever might be the subtilties of the Major's character or the appositeness of his designations, it was certain that he was a very queer old personage. It was, moreover, to be feared that he had been the humble instrument, under Satan, of bringing to unhappy terminations the careers of many poor youths who had come down, enfeebled in mind and body, from before Sebastopol.

Du Lys's last afternoon on the Bosphorus was spent in a farewell interview with Treworden, in taking note of his messages to comrades in the regiment, and of his wishes in regard to himself for the little time that he would yet remain in the service, and in charging one or two officials with the duty of seeing his little property carefully put together, and him and it comfortably embarked. He arranged that the corporal was to send news of himself as soon as he arrived in England ; and having said their last, and yet their last, and again their last, friendly words, they struck hands and parted. Treworden was to leave in a few days. Such is one of the possible effects of war. The man might have been, perhaps, du Lys's body-

servant had the country remained at peace—might have blacked his boots and stood behind his chair; but du Lys would never have been proud of his attachment and friendship.

His last evening was passed at a little gathering given by a lately wounded officer named Rees, as a farewell entertainment to him. There was very little variety in the evening-parties; and so there is not much to tell of this meeting as distinguishing it from that at which du Lys first made the acquaintance of his revered superintendent. He had that day presented Wiggy with two boxes of cigars of very superior quality, which he had procured by a fortunate chance; and he took the opportunity of the party to lose a few substantial bets to the veteran.

Towards the close of the entertainment it was generally felt that du Lys's health ought to be drunk; and more than one guest moved Rees, their host, to propose it, imagining that he had forgotten his duty in that respect. Such, however, was by no means the case. When they came to know Rees better they discovered that, so far was he from ever neglecting an occasion of delivering, or of trying to deliver, a little address, that he would willingly at any time give a party if his friends would only listen to his oratorical efforts. Some spoke of him as "a prating bore;" but others, more discriminating we will hope, thought him

to be carrying some great and interesting ideas which hitherto he had not succeeded in delivering. His pains were much aggravated by the stimulus of alcohol, and his throes on festive occasions were severe—immortal words having, as it were, come to the birth, but there being no strength to bring them forth. With very little pressing Rees was got on his legs; and, silence having been willingly observed, he proceeded to introduce his toast:—

“Gentlemen,—I have been—requested—that is, I have been called upon—called upon to—to say a few words—to make, in fact, a few observations—which is very much the same thing, ha, ha!—identical, as one may say—ha! quite so—but, ah, to proceed—I have been requested—my friends around me have thought proper to depute—that is to say—to—well, never mind—you understand me, I am confident—yes, there cannot be a doubt about that—for I am addressing—I say I am addressing—that is to say, I am—ah—addressing—a most—a most intelligent congrega—no, assembly—that is, company—most intelligent—let me observe that the assembly which I am addressing is most intelligent. I trust that I do not—that I am not—that I am not complained of—for a too—too rapid communication—succession, that is—for a too rapid communication—of ideas. If so, you will pardon—you will, I am sure, excuse—the velocity with which

I am accustomed—with which I am wont, I say—to proceed—a habit, gentlemen—a habit produced—that is to say, ah—that is to say, engendered—a habit engendered—by long practice—practice, you understand me—by long practice in addressing—addressing assemblies—ah—intelligent assemblies. I am not, I believe—I say, I believe that I am not—not given to—to prefatory—or, as it might be put—to introductory—to introductory or prefatory remarks—it is my method—it is my constant—that is to say—ah—method—to go straight, you know—to go direct—to go direct to—to the subject—a method—or, as it might be said—a—a—rule—which is a similar expression, you will perceive—a rule or method which—which I should recommend—which I should strongly—that is, earnestly—earnestly and strongly recommend—recommend to—to those who—those who aim at—at arriving at—who aim at arriving at—arriving at or attaining—attaining a facility, if I may say so—or, in other words, an ease—a facility or ease of utterance. There is——”

Here there were cries of “Question,” at hearing which the speaker began again *da capo*. And so more than once. Indeed it is possible that he might have gone on to this day, and have been left speaking when this MS. went to press, if an impetuous reveller had not cut in, interjectionally, with, “du Lys, here’s to

your good health, and pleasant voyage, and fortunate campaign, my dear fellow !”

This hint others were not slow in following. Another guest sung out, “Health and long life to you, du Lys !” and a third capped that with, “The same to you, du Lys, and many of ’em !”

Meanwhile the orator was still finding no end in wandering mazes lost. He was so intent on his discourse, that the healths had been pretty well drunk when; in a desperate search after a synonym, his eye detected a laggard wassailer in the act of complimenting du Lys, whereupon he exclaimed, “I haven’t finished ; I haven’t half finished,” to the great amusement of all present.

Rees was greatly mortified ; and his disappointment, though inevitable, was unfortunate. For it can hardly be doubted that he was charged with important messages to mankind, though up to this time they had been so imperfectly uttered, that our species had not benefited much by them. In fact he was obscure, even for an oracle ; he lisped in speeches, and the speeches did *not* come—an untoward thing in oratory. It was said of him that he was only half a *Vates*, nature having blundered in the construction of him ; for though he enjoyed the Vision — often in double measure—the Faculty Divine was not his.

Major Warner was so satisfied with du Lys’s be-

haviour towards him that he exhibited some emotion, and swore solemnly that he was very sorry indeed to lose du Lys. Nothing has since been heard of the flight of the accusing spirit that carried up the oath, of his manner of reporting the circumstance, or of the behaviour of the recording angel on receipt of the charge. It is to be feared that entries of the kind had become matters of routine, and the prevailing opinion is, that the item was entered in the usual manner on the debit side of Wiggy's account.

On the following day du Lys was once more on board ship, and on his way back to the Crimea.

CHAPTER V.

MISFORTUNES—A GLEAM OF LIGHT.

THE difference in station between Captain du Lys and Thyrza Knowles was sufficiently great in the spring, as most people would have thought. But as the year drew to its close, the difference seemed to increase both ways, as it were : for du Lys had certainly been doing exploits calculated to raise him in the world's opinions ; while Thyrza's fortunes, low as they had been before, fell lower. There is always a deeper depth which may be sounded, no matter to how vile a level one may have already descended.

Thyrza went about her daily duties the day after Captain du Lys had departed just as briskly and collectedly as ever she did. There was nothing in her manner or her address which could have led any soul to suppose that distress had come upon her ; and yet it was true that the light of her eyes, as it were, had been extinguished. This young man had called up for

her the purple haze which seldom fails to enchant some stages of youth—had lapped her in a sort of Elysium. He was so kind, so gentle, so refined. He was so much the being which her idea had endeavoured, but had failed, to create; he was the consummate fact which her humble fancy had been unable to conceive. In general, our best realities only approach the perfection of our ideas; but it was not so with poor Thyrsa. Her fine admirer was finer than she had ever thought a young man could be. And as if his personal and social merits had not been enough to delight her, it at last appeared that he was a soldier—radiance added to glory, or, as old Touchstone said, honey made a sauce to sugar!

The vision had disappeared suddenly. The purple light was gone; and men and things once more in their workaday dress, oh how stale and flat they seemed! The little “waking bliss” had been the result of accident; it had been but a span long; it had ended as it had begun; and there was not, according to the nature of things, the smallest probability that it could ever be renewed. It was dead and buried; and Thyrsa’s hopes for this life were, she thought, dead and buried with it. In the night watches, in silent communings, the girl had bitter times of it. Her pillow was wet with tears; and the locket, hidden by day, was drawn forth and caressed

in the darkness. She was miserable enough to have fallen a prey to misery, had there been no force in her character to counteract her sorrow. But fortunately Thyrza had a spirit of her own. She never thought of such a thing as turning melancholy. She may at some time in her childhood have learned the inspired passage about patience on a monument and the worm in the bud: if so, she took it only as a warning. She knew that she had much to do as well as to suffer in this world, and she never cherished the least thought of yielding. Older people than Thyrza know that a struggle, even against despair, is half won as soon as the determination to withstand has been taken. She did not know this. She worked, not because work was a remedy, but because it was a duty.

One effect of Thyrza's keeping stoutly to her active duties was, that she heard occasionally from friends and neighbours of what was doing in regard to the war. There were plenty of anxious hearts about Brigend and its neighbourhood, which followed the movements of our army with exactness; and from some of these she would constantly hear of what was happening. At first only the adventures of particular individuals were reported. John Styles's mother had been informed that John's regiment had reached some part of Turkey, and that John was in excellent health and enjoying his sight of foreign lands, and didn't ex-

pect there would be any fighting. And then Mrs Styles (who was much given to reflection) wondered whether John mightn't bring her home a real boa—which she evidently believed to be some furry reptile, of which English shops furnished only imitations—and whether John would meet with a white bear, the same as her poor dear brother did (who had been mate of a Greenland ship), and hoped that the British army would in no contingency have to visit Babylon, the atmosphere of which she believed to be highly demoralising; during which observations Thyrza would be considering how it might be possible to ascertain where the Guards were, or whether there was a chance of their being soon at home again. She would go from Mrs Styles to “a person who understood military matters,” and throw herself across the usual beat of old Sergeant Daldy, who hobbled daily along the Prince's Walk at Wyde. The sergeant, who had long ago, when she was a child, singled out Thyrza as a female deserving of his regard, put on his most insinuating air, complimented her on her looks, and informed her that he believed the troops had got to some of those heathen places, and he wished them well out of the mess. For his part, he did not imagine that any glory could be picked up in the way in which we were going to work: first, because soldiers were not soldiers nowadays, and knew nothing; and secondly,

because Spain or the Low Countries was the region proper for developing military talent. Sergeant Daldy passed from this opinion to some mention of the assault of Badajos, or the closing of the gates of Hougomont, to the facts of which he testified on oath; and then he asked Thyrza whether she thought anything like that would happen in such a trumpery place as Turkey, where they wore dressing-gowns and turbans!

But as the interest in the campaign grew deeper, and she discovered more acquaintances who felt that interest, a little more distinct idea of what was being enacted was conveyed to the girl's mind. She even found one or two people who took weekly newspapers containing military narratives, which she was permitted to read; and when the weekly paper was a week old, she was allowed even to carry it home for her mother's amusement, who received it highly impregnated with tobacco, and illegible in many columns from grease and other impurities. The time had come now when the troops were suffering severely from cholera, and many terrified glances would she cast at any passing messenger or excursionist from the Tower of Lys, to assure herself that there was no sign of mourning about that person. But there was never indication of anything wrong; and by-and-by she read that the troops were going to the Crimea, a rough map of which, and of the Black Sea coast between it and

Turkey, was shown on the newspaper. Before the much-stained ancient paper had reached Thyrza's hand, the troops were already on Russian soil, and had fought and won their first battle. This she heard by the voice of fame long before she had a chance of reading it in a paper, and much her heart palpitated at the news. All sorts of stories were being told. There had been a victory, that was certain; what the cost of the victory had been was variously stated. Mrs Styles did not yet know whether John was safe. Sergeant Daldy was bitterly sarcastic about the whole thing, and said he believed the British nation would accept any sort of circus work for fighting nowadays. A few Rooshans had been frightened away, and that was enough to crow about. When they did something like Vittoria or Waterloo, he would own that they were entitled to make a fuss.

It was quite clear that the Guards had been engaged, but no particulars were to hand. If du Lys had fallen, it would soon be known in the neighbourhood; but he might have been wounded or taken prisoner! How could Thyrza assure herself that he was safe? Of course it all came out in time. Even at St Ann's Cottage a list of the killed and wounded was scrutinised. The Guards had suffered severely enough, but the name of du Lys was not mentioned for good or ill. His regiment had distinguished it-

self, and he shared in its glory and was safe; that was a precious thought. One escape, however, was but a momentary relief to the mind when every day might have its battle. And thus was Thyrza's heart ever drawn towards the theatre of war, and thus did du Lys become to her a sort of divinity.

While things were in this state, Mrs Knowles's health improved very much, and she and Thyrza were able to resume their old occupation. The mother felt considerable pride in the notice which a person of Captain du Lys's position had bestowed on her daughter, and was not unwilling to enter into the numerous discussions and hopes and fears to which the events of the campaign gave rise. She did not, of course, know how deeply Thyrza's feelings were engaged in the matter; and so far as Thyrza simply manifested an interest in the career of a young soldier who had befriended her and admired her, Mrs Knowles quite joined in the sentiment.

Unfortunately, they were soon compelled to give their minds to a matter nearer home than the siege of Sebastopol. Of a sudden Mr Betwold was taken dangerously ill. He went home one day from his office, and desired the housekeeper and general servant to prepare immediately supper for ten people, and then went out again. The woman was astonished at the order,

as Mr Betwold for long past had indulged very little in social pleasures, either at home or abroad. She was, moreover, greatly perplexed as to the execution of it; for Scrone was a town the supplies of which were neither regular nor copious, except on market-days. She, however, set about preparations, and did her best to satisfy him. While she was thus occupied, Mr Betwold kept returning to the house and leaving it, evidently much excited. At every visit he made some peevish remark at the backward state of the repast, and once or twice he grew very angry, and spoke to his servant in a tone and manner that were very unusual with him. But she, being an even-tempered woman, and seeing that something was fretting him, gave soft answers, and endeavoured to appease his wrath: some *contretemps* had happened in the business, she supposed; perhaps he had had one of his violent quarrels.

The hour which he had named for supper arrived, and he hurried forward the laying of the table and the placing of the chairs; and especially saw to the setting of wine on the board. This was all done; and the woman was rejoicing in the thought that her exertions were about to be crowned with considerable success, for she expected to put a fair supper before the company.

Guests in Scrone did not affect indifference to

entertainments; they had not enough of them for that. Most of the company, accordingly, was sure to be punctual at a spread. Surprising was it, therefore, that five minutes after the appointed hour had struck no knock had been heard at the door. A quarter of an hour, a half-hour, elapsed, and there was no arrival. The woman told her master that the hour of supper had long passed, and represented that some of the dishes would certainly be worse for the delay. She begged him to consider that she could not be responsible for any disappointment that might be caused by overdone viands. He took her remarks very coolly, and said the persons he had asked could not fail—they would be sure to present themselves immediately; but she, impatient that the cookery should be so unfairly dealt with, said she would herself run and tell some of them that supper was waiting, as there had evidently been some misunderstanding about the hour. She begged him to name some of the expected guests who lived nearest, that she might run and jog their memories; and in reply, he said the archbishop was the principal, but the General commanding in the Crimea was making every effort to be present as soon as he could slip away from a battle at that moment in progress; Lawyer Darke also would be there, if the devil would allow it; and Mr Calcraft, the finisher of the law.

This answer struck a chill to the faithful servant's heart, and overcame her for a moment. She perceived, however, that she would have to act promptly, and with a great effort she rallied her faculties. She would look out, she said, manifesting as little surprise as possible, and see whether any of them was at hand. Meanwhile, would he just remain quiet in his chair? for after fussing and fidgeting so long, he had now got into an easy-chair, and was getting sullen. No, he said, he would not remain quiet in his chair; he would go to bed for a little while before the company arrived: there would be plenty of time for this. The woman assented. He went up-stairs and threw himself, dressed as he was, on the bed, and uttered a long groan as he did so. She saw how he disposed himself, for he did not close his door. Then she stole off as fast as she could move, and fetched a surgeon, to whom, as they hurried together back to the house, she related what had passed.

The servant followed the doctor into Betwold's room, and stood ready to attend to any direction. The patient hardly noticed the surgeon's entrance at first, but he afterwards recognised him, and asked him if he had met his (Betwold's) father as he came up—a man who had been dead thirty years. “He's a d—d strong man, my father,” said he; “but as for me, I'm as weak as water—couldn't beat a child.”

“Have you been enjoying yourself lately, Mr Betwold?” asked the doctor; “had plenty of good liquor?”

“I’ve had some liquor, but it wasn’t good; that’s what’s the matter.”

“Not good! how so?”

“Why, I’m sure the archbishop put prussic acid in it. It’s taken all the strength out of me. Oh dear!”

The doctor looked inquiringly at the servant. “He’s had nothing particular, that I know of,” answered she. “He’s had no supper. He may have taken a little out of his bottle.”

“He’s ill, no doubt,” said the doctor. “Would you like just a thimbleful of brandy?”

“No, no. It’s poisoned.”

“I’ve got some that is perfectly pure, and very fine too.” He nodded to the woman, who presently produced from a cupboard, unseen by the patient, a bottle and glass. “Now take a taste of this,” invited the doctor. “I’m sure it’s all right.”

“No, not a drop, not a drop. You’re in league with the archbishop; I know you are. He’s set you on to poison me.”

“You forget that I’m a Dissenter. The archbishop never tries any trick with me.”

“Ah, so you are. You’re all right; of course you

are. You wouldn't poison a fellow for the whole bench of bishops, would you, old chap?"

"Certainly not. Now just swallow this drop. I'm sure it'll do you good. And lie as quiet as you can till I come again. Very quiet, mind." And the doctor withdrew from the chamber, followed by the servant. "If he should get to sleep," said the doctor, when they were in another room, "he would probably be better; should he remain awake, you must give him a draught which I will send. If he should sleep without or with the draught, let him have some nourishment when he wakes. He is very weak; he must be watched. I will be here again before morning."

Mr 'Betwold did not sleep. He took his draught after a little persuasion, but still remained awake. He would not hear of taking food; and two or three times he attempted to rise from the bed, saying that there was to be a consultation in the town-hall about the guns which he had invented, and he was afraid they would be waiting for him. As soon as the doctor returned he bade him put down his ear, and told him that there was a conspiracy in the house to prevent his sleeping, and that it was useless to appeal to any one except the doctor, his only friend. "It was they who brought the pigs in," he said, "and they're cunningly driving 'em about, and making 'em squeak. They distract me. And then these crawling things

on the bed-curtains. How can a man sleep with such creatures all round him?"

The doctor did all he could; but he could not get Mr Betwold to sleep. He called in a brother practitioner, but the two together could give the patient no relief. He shook; his nerves were in a terrible condition. He groaned and prayed, and was in great terror. He had been undressed, and got fairly into bed, and for forty-eight hours there he lay, suffering dreadfully in some way. On the second day the surgeon recommended that his relations should be summoned, and Mrs Knowles and Thyrsa came over from Brigend in a carrier's van. The sick man did not know them. They were extremely shocked, and turned to the medical man for explanation and comfort. It was, he told them, a very bad case; and all the skill of himself and his brother doctor had been insufficient to check the disorder. Intemperance had been the cause undoubtedly. He must have consumed a great deal more spirits than any one had suspected; and probably he had indulged in more than his usual quantity shortly before he was taken ill. It was sad intelligence.

The two poor women made a wretched meal off some of the dishes which had been provided for the expected supper; and returned to the sick-room only to find Betwold weaker, and inclining to be violent.

He vowed vengeance against some enemy, whom he threatened to annihilate as soon as the pigs went away, and said the crawling things had got inside his head, and were boring into his brain. The doctor told them that they must be prepared for the worst, and indeed the worst was not far off. About eleven o'clock that night the sick man became exceedingly restless, and began to mutter some prayers, his voice becoming at times loud and rapid, and then again subsiding. Then, all of a sudden, he shrieked out—"There he is. There he is. The devil. Don't you see him? Coming through that window. There——" Here he became violently convulsed; his voice ceased; they ran to support him, but it was hard to do that. His head and shoulders were thrown back, and his chest thrown upwards, so that the spine must have been bent to almost a semicircle. His features were distressingly distorted, the eyes staring, the lips drawn back. The limbs and trunk were rigid; there was no composing them. Indeed the man was dead!—had died in a fit. The principal act in a night of horror was over.

Deep was the sorrow of Mrs Knowles and her daughter for the dead. They had lost their only near relation, and one who had been always affectionate to them. They were now all in the world one to the other.

The melancholy days, ending with the funeral, had

passed, and Mrs Knowles and Thyrza were again at home, their grief embittered rather than lightened. They found that, besides their bereavement, they had to bear the loss of all their worldly means—that they had probably become paupers, in fact. For Betwold's affairs were found to have been in a condition by no means flourishing. He had paid his way while he lived, and he had left behind him enough to bury him and pay his debts—the merest trifle beyond this. When everything was settled there might remain, possibly, enough to pay the rent of St Ann's Cottage, now nearly due, and perhaps a half-year after that. When that half-year should have expired they would be houseless.

Just at this time it was generally known in the neighbourhood that Captain du Lys's regiment had distinguished itself in the Crimea, and had suffered greatly. Thyrza's alarm was quieted by the assurances which she got from all sides that he would do well; and she was gratified by the thought (also very generally suggested) that he would soon obtain promotion. With all this cause of rejoicing, she could not help thinking that fate was angry and unkind; for, as if to stamp on her mind the immense difference between them, her descent to absolute want had come at a time when he was rising in the world. Who could say how high he might get if he could be spared. He might

become a great lord. And was it likely that he would then ever again think of the poor cottage-girl, who would nevertheless not cease by day or night to think of *him*?

Now it was soon necessary to inform the agent of their landlord that they could not continue to rent St Ann's Cottage. The neighbours also were told of their coming removal from the house, and of their miserable prospects. If sympathy could have averted their distress it would have been wholly remedied; for the poor people about them regarded their case with unfeigned sorrow. Their misfortune was much talked of and lamented in the neighbourhood. The steward heard so much of widow Knowles's sorrows that he took occasion to mention the subject to his employer, who did by no means disdain "the short and simple annals of the poor," but was known to take a kindly interest therein. The said employer lent a ready ear to the story, made inquiries, and learned that Mrs Knowles was the widow of sporting Jack Knowles, who had rented Sandacres from the du Lys family; also that she was the mother of the straight, handsome girl whom he had often admired when his sports or his business had taken him near Brigend.

"It will never answer, my dear," Mrs Knowles said one day when they were sitting at their work, and discussing for the twentieth time their sad prospects;

“it will never do, Thyrza, for you to go out and work, for many reasons. I don’t doubt your ability, nor your goodwill; neither is it silly pride that makes me object (heaven knows it is time to put by that!): but I, although I manage well enough when you are here to help me, am miserably weak and useless, and should soon be in such a condition as would leave you but little heart for your work. Then, again, unless we could afford a warm, dry house, I am afraid that the want of that, too, would render me a burden, liable as I am to take these colds. It is hard upon you, Thyrza, but I do not see any reasonable course except to submit to our fate, and go into the poorhouse—at least I must do that.”

“Mother!” answered Thyrza, “how can you speak so? You know that we will be together, and share the burden, come what may. If it must be the poorhouse, you shall see that I can go there without murmuring; only I hope that there may yet be some other course less disagreeable than that. Mrs French, my uncle’s housekeeper, told me of some houses near Scrone where decayed widows are allowed to live rent-free. Only you must gain the favour of a certain society to get there; and, of course, there is not always an apartment vacant just when one happens to want it.”

“I think I will go there and ask whether there is a chance of being admitted—at any rate, how the appli-

cation may best be made. It seems hard that while many relations—not very distant ones either—have great influence, we should be so hard put to it for some one to stand our friend.”

“Would not some of them help us, mother, if we told them that we are of their own blood?”

“I cannot tell, my dear; but it might be worth trying. It may be that most of them never heard that they have such humble relations. You know my mother by her marriage made a social descent such as made her fashionable cousins very little anxious to own her; and she had the pride of old blood, if she had not wealth or position. So the branches of the family were easily separated when that was the case. I will, however, think over——”

She was interrupted by a knocking against the gate which led to the little garden, and by a hearty voice which called “Is Mrs Knowles at home?”

Thyrza ran and opened the door. A gentleman on horseback was outside rapping at the gate-post with his whip. “Good morning,” said he, when Thyrza’s well-favoured face appeared at the gate. “Can I see Mrs Knowles? That is, if I can find some one to hold my horse. I have no servant with me.”

“I’ll hold your horse, sir,” said Thyrza, going forward. “I’ve been used to horses. Mother’s inside: will you please to walk in?”

“Nay, there is surely some man about who will hold the animal for five minutes. No, faith, I don’t see a soul. Well, if you don’t mind. He’ll break his bridle if I tie him to the gate, so that would be of no use.” While he was saying this and alighting, which he did both together, Thyrza had placed herself at the horse’s head, and taken hold of the reins with much *sang-froid*. “Thank you,” he added; “I am very sorry to trouble you.”

Mrs Knowles, who was now at the threshold, recognised in her visitor no less a person than Lord Hardyknute, her landlord. It was not natural to her to be very much overcome by the sight or presence of great people; and therefore, though she was much surprised at the visit, she received her noble guest with self-possession, and begged him to be seated.

“Thank you,” said Lord Hardyknute. “But sit you also, Mrs Knowles, while I do my little errand; for I am sure you are not strong enough to remain long afoot. I hope your health is better than it has been?”

“I thank you, my lord,” answered the widow. “I am much better than I was; and as to standing, poor people must accustom themselves to that.”

“Well, now, sit for a little and hear a few words that I have to say to you. That, I am sure, is your chair. There, that is right. I have called in, Mrs

Knowles, to say that I am sorry to learn from my steward that you think of leaving the cottage."

"I am obliged to think of it, my lord; for since my brother's death (Mr Betwold the auctioneer in Scrone was my brother), I am unable to afford to live here."

Lord Hardyknute made a gesture when she named Mr Betwold, signifying that he knew the circumstances, and then continued—

"Well, my good woman, times may mend after a little. This world has its ups as well as its downs. Till there is a change for the better, I hope you will not object to remain in the cottage without troubling yourself about the rent. That is of small consequence to me. I have heard of your misfortunes, and hope I may be able to make your life more comfortable in other respects, as well as in keeping you as my tenant."

"Your lordship is most generous, but you mistake if you suppose that I have any expectation of ever being in better circumstances. There is not the least chance——"

"We don't know; we don't know what may come. But, at any rate, you'll consider it settled that you stay where you are; and as for the future, it must take care of itself."

"I don't know how sufficiently to thank——"

"No, never mind thanks just now, Mrs Knowles.

Your daughter there is a fine, hearty girl. She was born at Sandacres, I suppose ? ”

“ She was, and it was there she became so familiar with horses and their ways.”

“ Yes. You couldn’t part with her, I suppose, if an opportunity should offer of finding her lucrative employment ? ”

“ We never have, my lord, thought of living apart ; though Thyrza would, I believe, gladly take any employment that would not separate us.”

“ Ah yes. Best so. I have heard, Mrs Knowles, that you are related in some way to the Angevine family.”

“ I am so, my lord. It seems silly to think of such things, when one is reduced as I am ; but my grandmother, Lady Thyrza Valery, was a daughter of one of the Earls of High Vert.”

“ That accounts for your daughter being so well set up : it is her Norman blood. We have very little of that in my house. Saxons, all of us. I hope we have our good qualities ; but we are not so handsome or so stately, and perhaps not so proud, as those of Norman descent.”

“ I hope, my lord, that if my race ever had pride, it is out now of me and mine. We have had enough to quench it.”

“ It need not be a bad pride, you know. When it is

a part of character, it is not so easily got rid of. There may be pride anywhere."

Here there was a pause, after which his lordship said, rising, "Well, I will bid you good day now, and I hope you will be comfortable here, and soon get strong."

"Be sure, my lord, that though you forbid me to say much, your lordship's goodness is fully understood, and——"

"Nay, nay; the goodness, as you call it, may be very politic and profitable. There's an account open, you know, for the widow and the orphan which is kept by a better steward than mine. Now, good day; I will relieve my young friend here of her charge."

"Thank you," said Lord Hardyknute, as he took the reins from Thyrsa. "I was telling your mother that it is your Norman blood that makes you so straight and tall. They tell me you are a good girl too, which is better than being straight and tall. Don't marry the first man that asks you, unless you are sure that he is good too. Good day."

Mrs Knowles at the door and Thyrsa at the gate curtsied, and they looked a minute after their kind, pleasant landlord, as he rode off. His ruddy face, brown hair, and blue eyes rarely failed to impress people favourably. And he was young too. These

points, and many more, had been carefully noted by others besides the inhabitants of St Ann's Cottage; and before he was out of sight, there was a rush into the little garden of four or five female neighbours, who were naturally attracted to a spot where such an event as a visit from the living Lord Hardyknute had taken place, and who were perhaps a little desirous of knowing what had caused the conferring of such a distinction on the widow Knowles. It was some time before this company dispersed itself; for when it was ascertained that the widow did not intend to name, except in very general terms, the purport of the visit, the gossips solaced themselves by making remarks on his features, dress, and general bearing. As these were not much encouraged by the mother and daughter, they died out after a while, and the assembly dropped away, leaving at length to Thyrsa an opportunity of speaking with her mother in private.

"Thyrsa, my love," said Mrs Knowles, "that's a good man, if ever there was one."

"I was sure, from his look, that he was come for some good, mother. Does he belong to one of the charitable institutions? will he name us to the committee?"

"My dear, he did not say so, but he will help us to a roof over our heads, for all that."

"Oh, I am so glad! It is such a relief! And when are we to go?"

"We shall stay here, Thyrsa."

"Here? Impossible!"

"Not impossible at all. Lord Hardyknute, who is the owner of the house, and has a perfect right to dispose of it as he likes, has desired that we should remain here, rent-free."

"Mother! Well, that *is* a kind deed. Oh, mother!" And in the fulness of their gratitude the two went through a little scene of endearments. After which—

"Oh, and you'll keep your warm seat by the fire-side through the winters!" said Thyrsa; "that's worth a great deal."

"It is worth a great deal, Thyrsa. We ought to be thankful to Providence, and I am sure we cannot be too thankful to Lord Hardyknute. I wonder who has spoken for us."

"Yes. I wonder, mother. But, you know, I don't think it would take much persuasion to make him do a kind act to those whom he knew to be in need."

"No, I don't think it would. You can see it in his look. What a handsome young man he is!"

"Well," answered Thyrsa, "very kind and pleasant looking; I should hardly call him handsome."

“ He’s got beautiful eyes, and a white forehead, and his hair is perfect, and his cheeks—like apples ; and such lips and teeth ! I am afraid you’re hard to please, my dear.”

“ Well, you know, mother,” answered Thyrza, after having taken a few moments to reflect on her ingratitude in not at once admiring a person who had shown them so much goodwill, “ you know—although he’s a lord (and I’m sure he deserves to be one, if anybody does), and although there is certainly a great deal to admire about him, he doesn’t to me seem to have quite the sort of good looks that ought to be in a lord. He isn’t grand and stately, and I should call him rather short than tall, and his figure is broad ; and the way he speaks to you, I almost think I should like it better if it wasn’t so easy and hearty (though I know that’s wrong) ; but I like to see a person of quality quite different from our homely sort. Oh, when a grand, elegant man like I’m thinking of should humble himself to be gentle with me, I could—I could worship him !”

“ Especially if he had a military carriage,” said Mrs Knowles, who began to perceive and understand the comparison that was going on in Thyrza’s mind.

“ He’s very stupid,” said Thyrza, hanging her head a little, “ and it’s of very little consequence what I

may think ; but, you know, we've all got our fancies, and I can't help mine. But, mother, let's talk a little about the time to come, now that the prospect is a little brighter. One should never despair, I see."

CHAPTER VI.

SUDDEN LUCK—A LOVER.

WE all of us have had reason to know that Fortune is fickle; but some of us know also that she has oftentimes a method in her fickleness—that she will go persistently in a certain direction for a time, and then turn about and go as persistently in the other direction. This is just the way in which she acted with regard to Mrs Knowles and her daughter. She ran them to the very verge of want and misery, and then relented, and began to take the opposite course. As things went well with Captain du Lys, we have seen that they were going but roughly with Thyrsa Knowles. Thyrsa had reached a turning-point now; and a little farther on we may see how it fared with du Lys. This is what fortune was about now with the widow who had lately been destitute and looking forward to the poorhouse.

Only a day or two had elapsed after Lord Hardy-

knute's visit, and the mother and daughter were realising the relief and comfort which that visit had brought them. They had held many conversations similar to that which we repeated towards the end of the last chapter, and were engaged over their tea in another discussion of plans (which never seemed to tire), and in an approving dissection of Lord Hardyknute's features and character, when a knock, very unlike his lordship's rattle on the gate-post, was heard at the door. Both of them were a little impatient at being interrupted in their chat; but Thyrza tripped to the door, and found there a person unknown to her, who inquired for her mother. "Mother's here; please to step in," from her brought the stranger at once into the little room.

"Why, Mr Darke!" exclaimed the widow, in a surprised tone.

"Your servant, Mrs Knowles," rejoined he.

"It's many a long day, sir," she said, "since we have seen each other. I hope we meet as friends now. Do take a chair and a cup of tea."

"I'll take a chair, ma'am, thank 'ee, because my little errand can't be told in a minute; and I'll just say what it is before we talk about tea. Thank you, my dear." The last words were addressed to Thyrza, who had taken his hat and stick. When Mr Darke had settled himself into his chair, and had wiped his

brow and otherwise applied his handkerchief, he continued: "Well, Mrs Knowles, I don't know that atwixt you and me there's ever been anything that should make us other than friendly. We were very good friends once, when we were young and knew each other well."

"I know of nothing, Mr Darke; I am quite friendly."

"Yes; well, I thought you wouldn't be for taking up your brother's quarrels. However, excuse my mentioning him, as you've so lately lost him, and are no doubt much grieved. You will perceive, by what I am about to say, that my disposition, too, is friendly. And, not to waste time in preamble, as we lawyers call it, let me ask you straight if you have ever heard of Claybarrow?"

While Mr Darke was speaking, he had looked quite as much at Thyrza as at her mother; but Thyrza being in shadow, he could not see her very distinctly.

"Claybarrow!" said Mrs Knowles, repeating the name after him. "Yes, of course. Why, that's the property that my mother always said ought to be hers."

"Exactly; it was in the Angevine family."

"The title-deeds had been lost or mislaid; and a person who had got the property as a lessee continued to hold it as if it had been his own, though it was known that the lease had expired."

"I see you remember a great many of the circumstances."

"Certainly; because my father made a great inquiry about this property. My mother, up to a certain date, received annually a quit-rent from the old man who held the estate. When he died, his successor refused to pay the acknowledgment; and all endeavours to discover the deeds which could have compelled him to pay it (or rather to give up the land, for it was believed that the lease had run out), were unsuccessful."

"Well, Mrs Knowles, I have come to say that I have some suspicion as to where those deeds may be."

"You don't say so! But I mustn't be too ready to think anything of the sort. You must be mistaken. I know my father imagined that they must in some way have gone into the possession of the lessee, and must have been destroyed."

"They were not, to my certain knowledge, destroyed fifteen years ago. Whether they may be in existence and discoverable at this moment, I am not so sure."

"Good gracious, sir! do you mean to say that for fifteen years you have known where the deeds of this property lay, and have failed to apprise the lawful owners?"

“It was not my business to decide who was the lawful owner.”

“But a reward was offered for the discovery of these deeds.”

“I am aware of it. It seems to you a suspicious circumstance that I, having been in a position, fifteen years ago, to claim a handsome reward, should have chosen to forego the same; and that now, when probably no reward will be given to me, I come voluntarily forward to make this avowal.”

“Such conduct requires explanation, certainly.”

“It is easily explained. You remember that, until very recently, the person to benefit by the discovery of the deeds would have been your late brother. Now there were reasons, which you can very likely guess at, why I did not choose to trouble myself on your brother’s behalf. I don’t wish to rake up old strifes; but you know that I had cause to complain of his conduct.”

“My brother was a hasty man, but——”

“Well, I don’t want to dwell on the old grievance; but, you see, things have altered now. I have no longer the same reason for keeping silence.”

“You surprise me very much, Mr Darke. I only hope you are well advised of all you say.”

“Well, now, Mrs Knowles, that you perceive my intentions to be friendly, I will, if you please, take a

cup of tea with you ;” saying which, Mr Darke rose from his seat to go near the table. His movement made Thyrza move also, to serve him with the tea ; and he managed to look well at her when the light fell on her figure. While he sipped from his cup, she passed to her mother’s side, and asked her if Mr Darke’s communication imported that she was likely to acquire some property. Mr Darke answered the question, saying that he thought her mother very likely indeed to acquire a very good property. And Mr Darke farther observed that, although he scarcely knew how to prefer such a request, it would be a great convenience if Thyrza would put on her bonnet and walk out for a quarter of an hour or so, as there were some points in connection with the hoped-for recovery of the deeds which Mrs Knowles and himself had better talk over in private.

Thyrza had not the least objection to retire ; and she withdrew accordingly. As soon as she was beyond the gate, Mr Darke put down his cup, and informed the widow that, although he was aware that he could not claim from her the pecuniary reward which her father, and afterwards her brother, had offered for the recovery of the missing deeds, yet there was a reward which might be accorded to him if he should be successful in recovering the property for her ; and he would now state what it was. “ You’ve

seen my John, doubtless," said Mr Darke. "Everybody remarks him, he is such a handsome, genteel young man."

Mrs Knowles replied that she feared that she had failed to remark John.

"Must have remarked him; I'm confident of it," said Mr Darke—"didn't know his name, perhaps."

Mrs Knowles really couldn't say.

"Yes; that's it. Striking young man, you know. Well, John's in partnership with me, and will have the business some day. Brisk man of the new school—nothing old-fashioned about *him*—man of the day—sure to get on and take a high place."

Mrs Knowles, unable to comprehend what all this meant, could only look interested and make small bends of her head.

"Now, ma'am, you mightn't think it, but John actually and truly admires your daughter, and desires, above all things, to pay his addresses to her. I objected, I admit, because of—well, you know why; but now that there is no longer that obstacle, and now, too, that I've seen the young lady herself, and found that she's quite fit to be a mate for John, I no longer oppose his wishes. Now the only reward I shall ask is, that you allow John to come to your house as a suitor. What do you say, ma'am?"

"Where can Mr Darke have seen my daughter?"

Thyrza isn't a young lady. I thought a little while since we should have had to go to the poorhouse," was Mrs Knowles's answer.

"Any young woman that I approve of my son courting I must call a young lady. And you're many stages from the poorhouse, Mrs Knowles, take my word for it. Well, I can't say exactly where they may have met; but your daughter's often about, and John's seen her and admired her. Well, now, you'll give John your interest in his wooing?"

"It would be silly to make a promise of that kind in the dark. But this I can say, at any rate, your son shall have proper opportunity of becoming acquainted with Thyrza, who is very likely to decide for herself about choosing a husband. If you do us this kindness that you speak of concerning Claybarrow, we shall both, of course, feel under great obligation to you."

"Well, remember, ma'am, I spoke in good time, if you please. And to return to the subject of the deeds, I believe them to be in the possession of a person who has never troubled himself to ascertain their import, but who would probably act honourably in every way if he knew how great a wrong he would cure by giving them up."

"I cannot understand," the widow replied, "how a person to whom the disposal of this property would

be a matter of no concern should have possession of deeds which clearly belong to my family; or why, having them, he should have failed to claim the reward when they were so eagerly sought for."

"First let me say, ma'am, that, provided the documents turn out to be genuine, it won't matter a rush how they got into this gentleman's keeping; secondly, the gentleman didn't know, and doesn't know now, that he holds the Claybarrow title-deeds; thirdly, I can only guess at how he came by them, and my suspicion is, that his grandfather got them from yours as a pledge relative to some turf transaction (of which there were many between them), and that they were never redeemed, or, at any rate, never returned."

"My grandfather was a racing man, as I have often heard my mother regret. Something might be discovered among my late brother's papers to throw light on some of his turf connections, and to show whether his relations with the person you name may have been such as to render a pledge between them possible."

"That is a valuable hint. It would be well to examine your brother's papers. But I should tell you how I got my information; and the story is this: I was employed by the India Rubber Company at Wyde to ascertain for them certain rights of the old manor, of which their property forms part. The de-

scendant of the old lords allowed me to examine many of his parchments; and it was mixed up with these manorial documents that I found the title-deeds of Claybarrow. I saw them myself at the time. On my professional reputation I affirm them to be what I have said. I never mentioned the discovery to any one except yourself. The probability is that the documents have never been disturbed since I turned them over, and that they can be procured without much difficulty."

On Thyrsa's return Mr Darke addressed his conversation chiefly to her; and when he took his leave he said that he would have asked her to walk with him a little of his way home, but that he knew her mother would desire to talk with her concerning the property. He obtained Mrs Knowles's authority for acting on her behalf in the search for the deeds, and said that he would shortly call again to say how the affair was proceeding, and that very likely he would be accompanied by his son John.

His visit, it will be observed, had not only interrupted the little discussion of plans between mother and daughter; it had dispersed all the old plans founded upon their hopeless poverty, and had opened up a bright prospect which, for the present, would occupy all their speculations. And copious and pleasant matter they had now for conversation. Thyrsa

had never even heard that her late uncle had been the claimant of a landed property ; and she had scores of questions to ask about it. Then they began to wonder what the property, if secured, would be worth, and whether it would yield enough for them to live on. Mrs Knowles knew only the name of the estate, and nothing about its extent. She remembered that her father thought it worth some pains ; but then her father had been needy, and a small inheritance may have been considered by him to be of great importance. If only now it would produce for them a hundred pounds a-year or thereabouts, what a godsend it would prove ! Even fifty pounds a-year would to them seem like affluence.

But it wasn't for fifty pounds a-year that lawyer Darke had deemed it fitting to propose his son as Thyrsa Knowles's suitor. Whether Mr Darke had only consented to aid the course of a passion already conceived by his son, or whether the passion was suggested by himself on Mrs Knowles becoming her mother's heiress, and whether the story of his son's love was a pious fraud invented for the purpose of securing the estate, are questions on which the following pages may throw some light.

Mr Darke was somewhat better than his word as regarded time. In a very few days he was again on his way to St Ann's Cottage from Scrone, and on this

occasion he was accompanied by Mr John Darke, his son. They were on foot. Mr John Darke had protested against this method of locomotion, and had even exhibited some unfilial symptoms of rebellion. But Mr Darke the elder thought he knew what was best; and really this was not a business in which to neglect the smallest observance, or any little regulation of his conduct, which might increase the chances of success. It appeared to Mr Darke that John's generally prepossessing appearance and dashing style would of themselves be rather overwhelming, and calculated to terrify and distract the rustic Thyrza, whom it was now their policy to encourage and to familiarise with the idea that she might lead the brilliant John Darke captive. Seeing, then, how astonishing were the young man's intrinsic merits, it would be folly to intensify them by adventitious terrors. It appeared fitting, therefore, to the parent Darke that, instead of driving up to the humble cottage in all the glory of their one-horse four-wheel, driven by a man in a red waistcoat and a brown coat with bright buttons—a retainer's upper costume, continued by his own nether garments of corduroy—it would be more prudent to take the coach as far as the cross roads, and then to approach the little house on foot.

The junior Darke had not cared how thunderstruck Thyrza might be—didn't care if she died the death of

Semele, but cared a great deal about doing things, as he called it, in proper style. He was therefore not in the best of humours, and made his parent conscious of his displeasure as they walked along. Mr Darke, who was thinking chiefly of business, made no effort to maintain discipline, but rather endeavoured to stroke his son into good-humour.

Let not the reader, however, receive an impression of Mr John Darke being an ill-tempered fellow, because naturally he was rather cheerful, and disposed to be sociable: only, of course, he liked to show himself to the best advantage. His countenance was rather pleasant than otherwise, and there was usually a good-humoured expression on it. The features, it is true, were rather coarse, the brow low, and the jaws a little broad; still nature had not done so badly for him. As to what art had done there may be difference of opinion. Fashion was, in those days, beginning to depress the collars of coats, and Mr John Darke's collar was very low. Neckties, which had been worn a little before that some four inches broad, were getting thinner, but Mr John's was extremely thin. Men in general were ceasing to wear straps under their trousers; but Mr John not only had no straps, but he had his garment made with exceptionally loose legs, so that they might shake about and convince the world how entirely he was in the van of the mode. Very

fashionable men considered it audacious at that time to wear moustachios, but John Darke dared greatly, and grew something hairy on his upper lip. His waistcoat was double-breasted, of a staring checked pattern, and hung with chains, having appended to them medals as big as porters' tickets. He was rather below the middle height, carried a very supple cane in his hand, and smoked as he walked by his parent's side.

"There, that's the cottage," said the latter gentleman when they were in sight of St Ann's.

"That the 'ouse ! what, that 'ovel !" replied his son.

"Never you mind about that, John. They'll soon be in a better place than that. And there's something inside, I can tell you, that'll soon make you forget the dwelling—a really fine, handsome young woman, not a pretentious mincing thing like Miss Jessie Fullerton."

"Ah !" answered Mr John, whom the foregoing remark did not seem to please ; "the uncle wasn't a fine man—the fellow that thrashed you, you know, governor !"

"Thrashed me !" echoed the father. "Come, I like that. Your language is neither correct nor professional. The man committed an outrageous unprovoked assault, and was punished for it."

"Well, I've no objection to saying that he outrageously assaulted you, if you like that better."

“Leave that matter now, you dog, and think of what is before you. You’ve got to make yourself agreeable—and here we are at the door.”

It was Mrs Knowles who received the pair. Mr Darke, *père*, entered very politely, paid his compliments to the matron, and took her offered hand. But Mr John Darke proved the superiority of the junior generation by swaggering in with his hat on his head and his cigar in his mouth, still alight. He began to peer round the little sitting-room, and to show by his manner what a queer mean place he thought it; and when presented by his father to Mrs Knowles he gave her a nod, and then returned to his survey of the apartment, the father making a deprecatory sign to the mistress of the house, signifying that this was only an eccentricity of the highest fashion, and that after a little patience the youth might be found quite affable.

Having completed his scrutiny, Mr John drew a chair towards him, threw his leg over it, and so seated himself astride, his arm resting on the back. This was intended to impress Mrs Knowles with the extreme ease of his manners. His father evidently admired the grace of the motion and the attitude, and he gave a complacent glance toward the widow, as who should say, “The dog’s a little saucy, but you see he has some right to be so.”

At length, after a few minutes had elapsed, and the

elder Darke had uttered one or two commonplaces, Mr John condescended to say—

“Where’s your daughter?”

“I have no account to give you of my daughter,” answered Mrs Knowles, very coldly. And Mr Darke, seeing that she was not taking kindly to John, gave him a gentle hint by saying, “Come, you young dog, you must forget your London airs for a while, and remember that me and Mrs Knowles are homely old-fashioned people.”

Not noticing which interruption, Mr John pursued his subject by saying, “I hear she’s a tidy sort of gal.”

Mrs Knowles made no answer to this; but Mr Darke again interposed, and said, “Have done, will you, and talk like your father’s son. Sad impertinences, ma’am, young men allow themselves nowadays, and this scamp is, I am afraid, one of the most forward.” This speech was only half apologetic; there was a certain paternal pride excited by Mr John’s coolness. The situation was relieved by the entrance of Thyrsa, who greeted Mr Darke kindly, and then submitted to the process of being examined by the young gallant, much as the furniture and walls had been.

“And you’re Thyrsa, eh?” at last said Mr John.

“Yes, sir, I’m Thyrsa.”

“Queer name. But, mind you, you’re a passable gal for all that.” Then, looking over his shoulder at

his father, "Egad, with a little titivating she'd be thought rather spicy in Regent Street."

"Dangerous villain that!" interposed the parent Darke, *sotto voce*.

"You'd like to see London now, Thyrza, I'd bet a hundred," said Mr John, after drawing up his weed a little, as he broke off the ash with his little finger.

"Yes, sir," answered Thyrza, who entered into the fun of the thing. "I should like it very much, only——"

"Only what, my gal?"

"Only, sir, that I should feel very lonesome and helpless there."

"Not if you had a smart fellow for a protector and guide; one that knew all the ins and outs of London life—a fellow as could pint out to you every duchess in town, and as is personally known to a'most every actress of any note. You wouldn't feel 'elpless then?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Hexactly. You know what your want would be; and you've a cursed good idear of how to go to work to get what you want. If I know anything of London, Thyrza, you'll make your way there precious readily. You're sharp, you know."

The elder Mr Darke could not altogether conceal his pride in a youth who could in this patronising way beguile a girl of her affections before she could

look round. But instinctively feeling that the mother was not so fascinated as he was convinced that the daughter was, he sought to create a diversion which might leave John a clear field for his blandishments, and at the same time enable Mrs Knowles and himself to speak of business, uninterrupted. Wherefore he said—

“My son, ma’am, has not been much in your parish, and I don’t believe he ever saw the old priory and the tombs outside Brigend. Would it be too much to ask Miss Knowles if she would show him where they are? He’s fond of antiquities.”

“When they are not of the feminine sex,” put in Mr John.

“Incorrigible!” muttered Mr Darke, smiling.

“I’ll show you, sir,” said Thyrsa, making for the door, and in great hopes that her admirer would relieve her of his company for a while.

“My dear miss,” said the father again, “you’re going to direct him. It’s no earthly use that. He’s so stupid—no, no, he ain’t stupid; I didn’t mean that; but he’s heedless, you know;—he’ll never find the place by directions. What I meant was, if you would only be good enough to put on your bonnet and walk there with him. He’ll amuse you, my dear, with stories about London, and all the great sights, as you walk along.”

“ Oh !” said Thyrza, rather disappointed ; “ I didn’t understand.” She went for her bonnet, however, and went down the door-steps, Mr John following her in that leisurely way which betrays the man of the world wherever you find him—one in whom the eagerness of youth has given way before a profound insight into men and things.

“ Now, ma’am,” said Mr Darke, when the young people had gone forth, “ we can speak a little of business. I am happy to say that I have recovered your title-deeds, and the indenture of the lease ; indeed, that I have them here.”

He then spread certain parchments before Mrs Knowles, who was, however, but little wiser for the perusal of parts of them. He told the widow that her claim was so plain, and the documents in support of it so satisfactory, that he hoped to avert a trial altogether, it seeming clear to him that the solicitor of the person in possession, after being made to understand the hopelessness of resistance, would counsel his client to yield up the estate at once, and not to incur the useless expense of a contest.

They were a long time engaged with the matter, and had somewhat forgotten the lapse of time, when the return of Thyrza and Mr John Darke recalled them to a perception of it.

Thyrza had not gone abroad very eagerly. She did

not expect to derive much pleasure from Mr John's society ; and she was not a bit gratified by the thought that the neighbours were all saying (as truly they were) that there was a young gentleman keeping company with Thyrza Knowles—a downright plummy one, with a clean face and glossy togs. She waited at the little gate for the young man, who also halted there for a space that he might strike a light and begin another cigar. This effected, he announced that he was ready to follow Thyrza's lead.

“Now, my pretty,” said he, “as we are *not* in London, you shall direct my steps. Ah ! this way, is it ? By gosh, a shady lane ! Just the place I like when I've got a young woman to talk to.”

“There are trees nearly all the way,” returned Thyrza. “It isn't very far. We may get there and back again in half an hour if we're quick.”

“But I don't know that I am going to be quick,” said Mr John. “Very likely I shan't be. You know I've got something to say to you, Thyrza, and this is about as good an opportunity as I'm likely to get.”

“You have to cross the hill close by that white gate that you see up there ; and then there's a little stream with a foot-bridge.”

“Yes, I daresay there is, Thyrza ; but just you look here, my dear. Do you know what that governor of mine brought me out here for ?”

"No, I have no idea."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. He's a long-headed old fellow, mind you; and now that you're coming in for a bit of property, he'd like me to make love to you."

"Really!" exclaimed Thyrza, who began to be more amused than she had expected.

"Not the least doubt about it. But look here, Thyrza, I ain't the man to raise a gal's 'opes and then blast 'em; at least I'm not going to do so with you, whatever I may have done with others."

"No, I am sure you wouldn't."

"Now stop a bit, Thyrza; I must tell you something. There is a young woman that I've said some soft things to, without any governor to set me on; rather the contrary, with a governor that would cut up outrageous rough if he knew."

"And you are promised already?"

"Yes; but don't take on about it, my gal. It was done past repenting before I ever saw you, you know."

"No, I shall try to bear up," answered Thyrza.

"That's a plucky wench. Well, but I haven't told you all. As I said, the governor thinks I'm going to spoon upon you. Now I'll let him believe that I am spooney—confounded spooney. Throw him off the scent, don't you see? He'll forget all about Jessie Fullerton."

"Oh, that's her name," said Thyrza. "I suppose she's very beautiful."

“Well, pretty well for that, or you may depend *I* shouldn’t have given her encouragement. She is not so tall as you, Thyrza, and she isn’t so straight. More of the drooping kind, and devilish affectionate—too much of that sort of thing, in fact. I often do think that the gal’s too delicate; and if I should make her ’appy at last, there may be nasty doctors’ bills. But, as I was saying, I shall let the governor believe that I’m encouraging your ’opes, and that’ll ’oodwink the old buffer!”

“There, that building on the right of the water is the Priory, and the tombs and the crosses are close by. It’s impossible to miss them; so now I’ll return home, and leave you to think of Miss Fullerton in the solitude. I daresay you’d rather be without me.”

“I dessay not. It’s an odd thing about me, Thyrza, that I never can study antiquities, or be properly impressed with that sort of thing, unless I’ve got a female companion close at ’and. Then I’m up to the sentiment. Do come, Thyrza, and I’ll tell you what that old wretch of a governor said the other day about Jessie.”

In vain did Thyrza make excuses. Mr John Darke was determined to have her company to the Priory; and he had it, for at last she consented to go on. The young hero talked a great deal concerning the wickedness and craftiness of his governor, and opened his mind considerably as to little misgivings which

chequered the course of his true love, as, for instance, when the generous fellow said, "It would be miserable if it should turn out to be consumption, wouldn't it?" and Thyrza replied, "Yes, that would be sad;" and Mr John rejoined, "By gosh, I should be in for a nice thing then! I must take care, egad!"

In innocent dialogue of this kind they relieved the tedium of the way. They got to the Priory, and went over it and its little premises, by which Mr John was not so much interested as a man of his cultivation might have been expected to be. He was very much more struck when he saw Thyrza raise up a small granite trough which had been used for holy water, or something of the sort, and set it upon its pedestal, from which it had been displaced by accident or mischief.

"Damme," said Mr John, "if Jessie Fullerton could do that to save her soul! By gosh, what a smart girl you are, Thyrza!"

Evidently he had found Thyrza to improve on acquaintance, for he made several more comparisons between her and Jessie, and always to Jessie's disadvantage. He besought Thyrza to tell him all she knew (which wasn't much) about the history of the old place; but he didn't attend to what she said. In place of that he watched her looks as she repeated her little traditions, and the grace and freedom of her

movements as she turned herself and pointed hither and thither as the story might require. After every piece of information, or short legend, Mr John had something commendatory to say. Either Thyrza was a "devilish clever gal," or she was "a smart one, and no mistake," or "by gosh, he wished Jessie, poor thing, had as much go in her!"

At last Thyrza—in narrating how some holy prior had, in reprobate times, come out, cross in hand, against armed ruffians, who were overcome by his sanctity and courage, and then and there humbled themselves and begged his blessing—being doubtful of her ability to describe the scene by words, acted some of the parts, as the country people will often do. Thyrza, as the prior, with her right arm raised, her foot advanced, and her head thrown back, quite finished (as he would have expressed it) Mr John, and there was no more spirit in him.

"I tell you what it is, Thyrza," said Mr John, "if anything should come atwixt Jessie and me, I might be apt to indulge the governor and take you on, my gal. *You'd* never want the doctor, excepting, you know—but no matter, I shouldn't mind *that*. And, by gosh! I think you and me would hit it off first-rate, you know, for——"

Mr John had been ranging up alongside during this address, had made affectionate demonstrations, and

had been interrupted in the pleasant picture which he drew by a sounding box on the ear, which organ became the colour of fire, while his cheek looked like a gridiron, with alternate bars of red and white.

“Come, I say,” said Mr John, “that’s rough, actilly rough. Anything in reason I don’t mind. A moderate resistance is appetising, and makes it sweeter when you get it at last. But that sort of ’orse-play defeats its own object. I’m ’anged if I think you’ll have it at all now ; mind that.”

There was a bright light streaming from Thyrsa’s eyes. She didn’t hear a word of Mr John’s remonstrance. She was thinking of how she had once, as unprotected and unsuspecting as she had been to-day, walked in the wood with one whose garment’s hem Mr John was not worthy to touch ; how he had treated her as deferentially as if she had been one of the Queen’s ladies ; how, in taking his last leave of her, he had bent over her hand, rough with toil, and kissed it. It seemed to her as if to-day an outrage had been offered to du Lys rather than to herself ; for what was she ? a village girl, nothing more. If the wretch had succeeded in getting his lips near her skin she would have destroyed herself, she thought.

Thyrsa’s indignant attitude was no less trying to her new admirer than her former ones had been. The girl naturally carried herself with grace, and most of

her moods were becoming. Mr John was proceeding with his argument when Thyrza suffered her anger to abate. She saw that the youth was effectually checked, and contempt came once more to her aid. But she couldn't quite recover herself without a little tribute to nature, though her spirit was nearly equal to holding her up. As Mr John gazed approvingly at the fresh pose, behold two shining tears formed themselves over the bright eyeballs, and then overflowed and trickled down her fresh wholesome cheeks! She turned away her head, and raised the corner of her apron to her face.

"Come now, Thyrza," said the youth, "if you're disappointed it's your own fault. There's reason in roasting of eggs. A smart tap or a scratch with a well-pared nail I can take as well as another, but you're unmerciful."

Thyrza was angry with herself for crying. She dried and suppressed her tears quietly, and then turned again to Mr John Darke, saying—

"I think you've seen everything about the Priory now, and I should like to go home."

"Home, or anywhere you like," said Mr John; "but I say, Thyrza, hasn't there been enough of this humbug? Let me come and wipe your eyes, you know; that's a good girl."

"You'll keep your distance, if you please."

“Suppose I don’t please ; what then ?”

“Then I shall let your father and Miss Fullerton know how you’ve been behaving.”

“I say, Thyrza, you wouldn’t be so dishonourable !”

“There will be nothing dishonourable ; I made no promise.”

“But I gave you my confidence.”

“You gave me your impudence too.”

“Egad !” thought Mr John, “I thought I knew the tricks of the entire species. But here’s a new specimen, damme. One must live and learn.” Then aloud—

“There’ll be the devil to pay if anything comes out about Jessie. You don’t know what an old codger my governor can be when he’s excited. You won’t, Thyrza, will you ?”

“I most certainly will if you don’t walk homeward in the most orderly manner.”

“Of course I’ll be orderly. I say, Thyrza, I’ll tell you what I suspect. I suspect you’ve got a young man already.”

“Suppose I have ?”

“Well, I do suppose it. I told you I supposed it. I suspect he’s confoundedly jealous, and savage too, from the alarm you showed just now. I couldn’t guess the reason at first, but that’s it.”

"Then there's the more need for you to be careful."

"Odd gal you are, by gosh! but whatever you do, don't undeceive the governor. Come in quite friendly and merry, and I'll persuade him I'm mad spooney."

"You're very much in dread of your father, as if he was a Turk. He seems a good deal more kind and civil than you are."

"Is he, by gosh! Mind you, Thyrza, a governor's a governor."

Thyrza, not being in a captious mood, did not demur to this proposition.

Thus a truce was patched up. The two went back together pretty amicably, neither of them being revengeful or malicious; and when they re-entered St Ann's Cottage there was no sign of friendly relations having been interrupted.

"Ah, well, I hope you've had a pleasant walk, young people," said Mr Darke, governor, when they came in. Then *piano*, "Makes one think of old days, ma'am, to see a little cooing going on." Again, in unsuppressed tones, "You've seen the Priory, John, and all the antiquities, eh, you rogue? The dog had something to say when he got into the open air, I suspect, Miss Knowles."

"Yes," answered Thyrza, "he's freer out of doors, perhaps a little too free."

"I thought so," said the governor, bringing down

his hand and making it tell near his knee. "But you mustn't think too much of it, my dear; young men will be young men, you know."

"And old men will be cursed idiotical in their twaddle, and make a mull of everything," observed Mr John, craftily; to which remark his governor did not reply, but he contented himself with a look of satisfaction at Mrs Knowles.

As Mr John remembered that his fate was now to a certain extent in Thyrsa's hands, and that she might not be over-well pleased if her mother were slighted, he thought it might be polite to say a few words to Mrs Knowles. He wasn't smoking now. His cigar had fallen from his hand during a little *contretemps* which had happened to him while they were out, and he had not been sufficiently at his ease to light another. He threw himself sideways on a chair near the mistress of the house, and said to her—

"I'm fond of priories; got quite a passion for 'em. Thyrsa, I find, is very fairly posted in such matters. She's a smart gal, straight and active, and, I should think, 'ealthy. She don't ruin you in doctors' bills, now, I apprehend."

"No; my daughter, I am thankful to say, is very healthy. I am the offender in regard to ill-health, I fear."

"Ah! that's bad too. You'd be glad, wouldn't you,

if Thyrza had a 'usband? You'd be able to make him stand a good deal of the trouble and expense of your disorders."

"I should be very sorry, sir, now that I am likely to have means of my own, to be a burden on my daughter, or anybody."

"That's right," said Mr John; "stick to that. There's nothing that would be more likely to incline a sensible man to matrimony than a clear understanding on that pint."

He thought that after he had come to particulars in this way, Mrs Knowles could no longer have the least doubt as to his ultimate intentions. Sly fellow!

Meanwhile his astute parent said a few fatherly words to Thyrza. "And he was a little forward, my dear? You see, he's been in London, and seen a deal of life. Town life makes 'em very confident. He didn't want encouragement, did he, my dear?"

"No," said Thyrza, "he wanted something else, and he got it."

"Did he, now? Well, it would have taken me three weeks of begging and coaxing when I was a young man before I could have made that progress. But these young dogs go at railway speed. Everything's accelerated. I expect that the human animal will reach maturity at twelve years old, and that families will be born in litters." Then returning to business.

“I think John is a very constant young man. I think there’s true metal under that dashing exterior.”

“I think there is, indeed,” answered Thyrsa, in whose mind brass and quicksilver were the metals imagined.

“Yes,” continued Mr Darke, changing his figure; “the outside gilding will certainly come off, and we shall see that he’s real oak.”

“Do you mean that he’ll be a log?” asked Thyrsa.

“By no means, my dear—by no means; anything but that. He’ll always be clever and brilliant. But it’ll be a business-like, domestic wit, still inclined to be playful, in place of the chaffy, contemptuous humour which now lights up his whole style.”

“The change, whenever it comes, will be a great improvement,” said Thyrsa.

“So some may think, my dear. But come it will, you may rely upon it, whenever he finds he’s a proper outlet for his affections. I can see him a loving husband and a fond father.”

And as if to hold as long as possible this vision which his prophetic (one might almost say superstitious) mind had seen, Mr Darke turned his eyes upwards, and was in the spirit for a short space. “I think,” then said he, coming back from his reverie, “that your mother has something pleasant to tell you about her property, and so John and I will now take

our way back. I hope you'll like John—indeed I'm sure you will."

Thereupon, the governor summoning his son, they both took their leave — Mr John offering his hand very affectionately to Thyrza, and saying to her very loudly that he should take an early opportunity of calling again.

CHAPTER VII.

A RISE IN THE WORLD.

EVERYTHING turned out as Mr Darke had expected; and, in a very short time, Mrs Knowles entered upon the property as owner, and then let it to a new tenant. The yearly rent of it was upwards of £600. Thus the widow, who had been so lately destitute, was now, by a sudden turn of Fortune's wheel, become, as it seemed to her, positively wealthy. Neither was money the only result of the change. A month or two after it was known that Mrs Knowles had acquired the Claybarrow estate in right of her descent from an Earl of High Vert, a dozen well-born people came forward, eager to claim kinship with her who had been so lately desolate. Their affection for a widow who had become free from the reproach of poverty was suggestive of the joy that kindles in another place over a repentant sinner. But this is anticipating a little.

Indeed, although at present she became acquainted

with only a few of them, it was a demonstrated fact that Mrs Knowles was a cousin of one half the aristocracy of these kingdoms; and among her many connections was the illustrious house of du Lys—a distant relationship, but nevertheless a genuine one. Of all the startling items of the transformation-scene not one, probably, affected Thyrza Knowles so sensibly as this remote consanguinity. She had not only attained socially to a level very much nearer that of Captain du Lys, but some of the blood in her veins, if never so little of it, corresponded to a portion of his. The gulf between them had been much contracted. A great many things which were next to impossible under the old conditions were now such as might occur by very ordinary chances. But, not to cherish fond and foolish imaginations, Thyrza knew that now she might some day meet du Lys on a footing of equality, and that very soon she might be among acquaintances who could inform her concerning his fortunes.

It is not extraordinary that, with the taste which both Mrs Knowles and her daughter had always had for the manners of gentle society, they very rapidly learned to act and to express themselves as correctly and like well-bred people as if they had been to that manner born. Both were very solicitous that defects in Thyrza's education should be remedied at once.

And Thyrza set to work with such will, that before long it would have been very difficult for any of her new friends to discover her shortcomings; while in regard to riding, carriage, figure, and looks, they were not slow to discover many points in which she was immeasurably beyond most of them. In less than a month from the recovery of their property, it was the fashion among young men in the Vert district to admire Thyrza greatly and to seek her favour. She was, of course, not insensible to the sentiments which she created; but the value of them in her eyes was chiefly in the hope they raised that what so many men were willing to yield, one particular man might not withhold. Then, again, she remembered that du Lys was so elegant, so fastidious, that what could fascinate men in general might be far from satisfying *him*. And she worked away with redoubled ardour at her new studies when she thought how greatly they might aid in bringing her up towards the standard by which his discernment would be sure to try her.

There was such simplicity, sincerity, and kindness of manner about the girl, as made her own sex in general endure her advantages with much more equanimity than they generally show; and some of the more liberal of that sex not only forgave her, but took a liking to her. Indeed, now that prosperity had come to Thyrza, it found her more ready to do it credit

than many who had been trained to fill places of honour. The proverb about a beggar on horseback does not often hold true in regard to women.

Arrangements were being made for a change of residence to a house suitable for persons of their means ; but ere they left St Ann's Cottage, Mr John Darke twice paid them a visit. On the former occasion of the two, he found only Mrs Knowles at home, for Thyrza had gone on some errand into Wyde only twenty minutes before he arrived. Whether or not he was severely disappointed at not seeing his young friend was not discoverable from his words or manner ; but he seemed, since he last presented himself, to have understood more clearly what the change was that his father had effected for the forlorn women. His behaviour was not quite so offensive as it had been on his first visit ; he did not enter with a cigar in his mouth, and he condescended to bid the widow good morning. He asked after Thyrza, and on learning that she was from home, he began to talk rather plentifully about the Claybarrow property.

"It's a tidy bit of land," said Mr John, "and I've no doubt will let well ; but I ain't up to many particklers, because that governor of mine chooses to keep this business in his own hands."

"I don't think it could be in better," answered Mrs Knowles. "I am sure he has done wonders for us."

"'Cute old buffer, no doubt; and he certainly has managed 'ansomely for you. But perhaps he isn't quite so sharp as he fancies, after all. He'll be over here on Thursday."

"Oh! Mr Darke is coming on Thursday?"

"Yes; I heard him say he was. There are some papers to sign. I suppose you'll tell him that I've been here."

"I may do so. I presume there is no reason for keeping your visit a secret."

"Devil a bit. He'll be glad to hear that I was over, and I hope you'll tell him. I should come this way oftener if I hadn't so much to do. Will always rush over when I can get an hour to spare."

As Mrs Knowles did not reply to these observations, Mr John found it necessary to continue them.

"I was greatly interested in the Priory," said he. "Jolly old place. Must have been very melancholy when the friars lived there. But, I say, Thyrza's a very fine gal. I think most 'ighly of her, I assure you."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do; and the governor (the old dodger!) knows it. I daresay Thyrza doesn't think altogether badly of me, does she?"

"I really cannot tell you," answered Mrs Knowles.

"You haven't heard her say that I was a thorough-paced one, now, that I'm rather up to snuff, that I've been overlaid with the right polish?"

"No, indeed I have not."

"Perhaps she said I was too 'igh for her to aim at, too popilar with the ladies for any but the very primest to have a chance; she said, I dessay, that some lucky gal of condition would win me at last. They take that line sometimes."

"I never heard any remark of the kind from my daughter."

"No! then I'll tell you what it is; between you and I, Thyrza's close—remarkably close. Intelligent gal. Sure to make her way."

On taking leave, Mr John said, "Thyrza'll be rather mad, I'm thinking, when she finds I called in her hab-sence. But such accidents will 'appen, you know. And you can tell her that I shall be over again next week. That's as soon as I shall have time to spare. If you think me looking stylish to-day, you can tell her so."

On his next excursion to Brigend, Mr John overtook Thyrza, who was on her way home. She was therefore obliged to endure his company for more than a mile of walk. But Mr John was much subdued on this day, and his company not so disagreeable as might have been expected. He rode a grey horse, and when

he came up with the girl, and she looked round at the noise of the horse's steps, he said—

“By gosh, Thyrza, we're in luck to-day, anyhow! Here you are out on the road without any governor's manœuvre. Well, my pretty, and how goes it?”

“How do you do, Mr Darke?”

“Well, to say the truth, I'm not quite so bright as might be; and I'll just tell you, Thyrza, what's the matter, only I think I'll dismount. You won't be afraid of the nag walking near you?”

“No, not much,” answered Thyrza.

“People not accustomed to 'orses have sometimes a silly fear of 'em, which those that understand them know to be all nonsense.” This was said in fragments as Mr John stopped his grey and alighted; and Thyrza did not take much heed of the remark. Her mind was away to another road, not very distant, and it saw a person who *was* very distant, alighting also from a grey horse and coming to her side.

“Why, on a Sunday in the parks in London,” continued Mr John, after his descent, “there are 'undreds of 'orses out, some of 'em hanimals of the very 'ighest breed.”

“Are they only there on Sundays?”

“Well, there may be some slow people about at other times—invalids and elderly ones; but business prevents the real kiddies that go the pace from show-

ing every day. Sunday's the day. Then you see 'em doing the thing in real style—'orses and 'acks, and drags and traps. There's some hanimation then."

"And was your horse a very fine one?"

"I didn't have the same every Sunday; but there was one I always got if I could—a brown, a slapper."

"You seem to have been very gay."

"I think I did the thing about as well as a man with a confounded near governor could do it. Mind you, I knew how to do it as well as the next; but most ready, most reckeration, that's about the rule."

"Weren't you always ready?"

"Me! I should think I was, rather; but most ready means most tin, you know, Thyrza—biggest lot of shiners."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes; and, by gosh, those that could stand it did rather astonish one! Cussed if it doesn't hexite a fellow to think of it! There was Cobbley, now, of Bidder and Clink's, the great oilmen, you know—wasn't that a smart fellow! Kept his own tit, had two of 'em sometimes, and made a figure, I can tell you. And Dwight of Snelling's 'ouse; why, that little blade was a'most a lunatic when you put him on the outside of a 'orse. Over the rails, over the ditches, over the ha-has, flying at everything, couldn't stop him, always in trouble with the park-keepers; but what

did little Dwight care? He'd put his 'and in his pocket and make it all right with 'alf-a-crown: bless you, I've seen him tip seven or eight of 'em on one Sunday."

"But did you never go to church?"

"Church! A feller *would* lead a nice life if he was at his business all the week and then went to church of a Sunday. Who'd keep the parks alive? Who'd ride the 'orses? Who would there be for the gals to look at? No, I suspect it's the slow parties that are seen in the parks on week-days that take shelter in the churches when the parks are too lively for 'em on Sundays."

"Are you going far from home now?"

"Well, Thyrza, I'll intrust you with a secret: I ain't going far at all. I was going to see you at St Ann's Cottage, and nowhere else."

"Is that a secret?"

"It ought to be. I start off to look after you; very well, I overtake you on the road. Then, of course, we've met by accident. Why should I go and turn your 'ead by letting you know I was looking after you? You can't be too cautious about encouraging women's vanity. But you see I'm going to place more confidence in you, and so I don't mind letting you know the facts of the case."

"I hope Miss Fullerton is well," said Thyrza.

"Well, she is," answered Mr John—"uncommon

well for her, and disposed to be vixenish in her mild way. It's that that makes her so well, mind you. Rub her hair the wrong way and put her temper up a bit, and she'll be ten times more hanimated than when her wheels are all greased and everything goes smoothly."

"Then would it not be a good thing to rub her hair frequently the wrong way, so as to keep her strong and hearty?"

"By gosh, Thyrsa!" answered Mr John, looking approvingly round, "you've got a 'ead on your shoulders, you have. Do you know, that same idea came across me. We might worry her into rude vigour, torment her up to a brisk circulation. Only, you see, 'twould be paying dear for the improvement, for she ain't so nice when she's in her tantrums."

"Is it you that have angered her?"

"Well, that's the very thing I was going to confide to you. It's my belief that she found out I was over here once or twice, and she's putting her nose in the air, and treating me with perlite indifference (but, bless you, she don't mean it!), and making believe she's in 'igh spirits and don't care a rap."

"But think how her health is improved."

"Well, it is that. But, after all, what's the good of 'ealth if it's only to be got along with a cat-and-dog life?"

"You might confide in her."

"Not easily. She hasn't made any complaint, mind you; only putting on her airs and forgetting to cough. I couldn't demean myself by asking what's the matter. Besides, that's what she wants. That would be just playing her game. And she wouldn't believe me if I did let her into the secret—that's more."

"You must have deceived her before, I'm afraid."

"Hah! I may in some small matters. How sharp you are, Thyrza! But I could persuade her easy enough, for all that, if I had the game to myself; but there's somebody setting her on—I can see it."

"A rival?"

"Rival! damme, that's a good one. Rival, by gosh! Rival is it! No, Thyrza, no: that *ain't* said with your usual cleverness. I should like to see a rival—I'd rival him. No, it's some sly, insinuating codger that's feeding her with absurd fancies. I suspect the governor. Just like his craft."

"How can you think such a thing?"

"You see, I'm letting him think how spooney you and me are; and, egad! I've overdone it—that's just the fix. Governor swallows, and thinks, the confounded old guy, that he's 'elping matters by damping Jessie's 'opes."

"I'm very sorry," said Thyrza, "that there should be a misunderstanding. But here we are at St Ann's Cottage. Will you come and see mother?"

"I'm afraid," answered Mr John, "that I shouldn't know what to do with the 'orse."

"That is a difficulty," said Thyrsa.

"You'll tell the old lady I was here, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll tell mother."

"And look here, Thyrsa; tell her to be sure to mention it to the governor. Fact is, I've got a dooced hard game to play. Mustn't undeceive the old 'un; and yet 'oodwinking him sends Jessie capering."

"But it agrees with her so well."

"Humph," grunted Mr John: "well, good-bye, my pretty; don't split, whatever you do."

And Mr John mounted his horse and departed, not much at his ease, indeed much disquieted, for affairs had taken a decidedly perplexing turn with him. There was only too much reason to believe that his suspicion concerning Jessie Fullerton being aware of his visits to Brigend were correct. Jessie, though a delicate girl, had at times a temper of her own, and nothing roused this temper more surely than the thought of her lover offering attentions elsewhere. She quite understood the danger she was in at the present moment. She had seen Thyrsa Knowles, and felt what a formidable competitor Thyrsa might be, even without her fortune; but with her expectations, which Miss Fullerton understood to be much greater than they really were, Thyrsa against her would be all the world to nothing,

unless Mr John could be brought back to his allegiance with a round turn.

Miss Fullerton was the daughter of a gentleman in the Excise department, and one of a fairly numerous family—not likely to take with her a large dowry when she should marry, and the more alive, therefore, to the necessity of securing her lover's affection by her personal attractions. When Mr John came back to Scrone in all the imposing brilliancy of his London varnish, he had at first pronounced his native town to be “an ’owling wilderness,” so keenly did he in that retirement feel the misery of being banished from the delights of the capital. But anon, while in the very depth of his grief and his impatience, he found that the wilderness nourished a rose. He *found*, be it repeated ; for when Mr John left home some two or three years before, the rose had not been there. A relief of the officer of Excise had taken place during his absence, of which he might or might not have heard, but from which certainly his mind had received no strong impression. The new exciseman inhabited the same house in which his predecessor had dwelt ; and Mr John associated that dwelling with forbidding visages and harsh voices, for the Misses Gage had had, one of them an obliquity of the eye, and the other such skin as virulent smallpox leaves behind it : they had, moreover, rebelled against the decree which made

them ill-favoured, and the rebellion manifested itself in acidity of disposition and sharpness of accent.

In place of those whom his disgust had formerly stigmatised as "gorgongs," he saw now a fairy with a pink complexion, soft, expressive eyes, and rich auburn hair; and the relief to his mind may be imagined. He soon discovered, also, that Jessie Fullerton, though quiet and retiring, possessed considerable power of observing, a pretty wit, and that excellent thing in woman, a voice that was ever soft, gentle, and low. In his epigrammatic way, Mr John declared how much his soul had been refreshed by the discovery of this "Aidee," as he termed her, blooming in a remote corner of the world. Mr John's compliment was repeated to Jessie, whose soul was lifted up at having obtained the approbation of one so brilliant and so critical. A mutual flame, as has been shown, sprung up. Mr John cherished the idea of, at some indefinite period, making Jessie his wife. But as the "gal" who was destined to that distinguished position must be gifted with artificial accomplishments as well as natural graces, the lover urged Miss Fullerton to qualify herself while she yet enjoyed the leisure of spinsterhood. John wished Jessie to cultivate a marked talent for music which she possessed, and to practise her sweet voice in warbling simple songs. His desires were complied with, though not without

some family difficulties, for Miss Fullerton also had a governor, who was not invariably tractable.

It was the lover himself who selected a tutor for Jessie. A delicate and somewhat effeminate lad, who had been at school with John, was afterwards encountered by him in London, as a student of music. The musician, who had grown to be a tall and comely youth, went back to the Vert district to practise as a teacher some little while before Mr John completed his career in the capital. He therefore, as being personally known to Mr John, as having achieved some success in his art, and as being socially "a confounded sop," was deemed by the lover to be a fit and proper person to assist in Jessie's education.

Young Minim soon discovered that Jessie had a talent which might repay cultivation and do credit to her preceptor; and it is suspected that he discovered in her some other qualities, for the sake of which he was inclined to bestow much care on her education. The "sop" admired his pupil very much, and his pupil knew it. She was not, however, fickle by nature, and she was not in any way false to Mr John; but she had a sort of instinctive knowledge that Mr Minim's admiration might be turned to account some day, and so she let him sigh, perhaps wilfully aggravated the depth of his respirations.

Now Jessie, although she had not the obtrusive

talent which Mr John called "sharpness," was quietly what he would have called "wide awake," had he discerned all her attributes ; for, in truth, Jessie had got his measure more accurately than he had hers, and this notwithstanding that she, through ignorance and rusticity, was blind to many of his imperfections. When she heard of the good fortune which had come to Thyrsa Knowles by means of old Mr Darke, her prophetic soul quailed at the idea that payment of the service might have been covenanted for by Thyrsa taking the heir of Darke to be her wedded husband.

Jessie, therefore, was on the *qui vive* before Mr John made Thyrsa's acquaintance ; and as soon as he did make her acquaintance, Jessie took order for punishing his disloyalty. The feelings of Mr Minim were not, it is to be feared, considered by her ; she merely made use of them. Mr John was piteously exercised by the passion of jealousy, the pangs of which were sharpened tenfold by the reflection that they were inflicted by a "sop." Jessie was self-possessed, firm, as sarcastic as it was in her nature to be—that is to say, her eyes were sarcastic when he tried first blustering and then complaining. Minim, whom John used to bully in old days, had grown to be the taller of the two by a head ; and in response to some feelers hazarded by the jealous lover, had indicated that he

meant to hold his ground. And it may be hinted, in a very low whisper, that Mr John was not quite so chivalrous a person as he would have had folks believe, or as perhaps he believed himself.

Mr Darke now established the mother and daughter in a comfortable but unpretending house in the country, not far from Wyde. They took very kindly to being waited upon by two servants, instead of doing everything for themselves. As all their proceedings were very quiet and unostentatious, it is possible that, beyond being stared at by the vulgar as "the two ladies that had come suddenly into land," they might have excited very little attention among people of position in the neighbourhood, had not a kindly heart which had shown mercy on them before, been prompted to go and say a word of congratulation on their improved fortunes. Very soon after they were settled in their new abode, Lord Hardyknute was announced as a visitor, and was received by Mrs Knowles this time in her drawing-room. He came towards her with quite the kindness of an old friend.

"Mrs Knowles," said he, as he took her hand, "I rejoice to see you comfortably established. I was in town when the happy change in your affairs was taking place, or I should have come earlier to offer my compliments. It gave me great pleasure, I assure you, to hear of your prosperity. You may remember

that I told you a little while since that there are ups in this life as well as downs."

"You did, my lord; and I have certainly experienced an 'up,' such as I could not have thought possible. No rise in the world could ever make me forget the kindness you showed me when we were in such deep distress. And your coming to say a word of goodwill now is another generous condescension."

"And how is your health, ma'am?" said Lord Hardyknute, as he took the seat that was offered to him. "Prosperity ought to have proved a good physician."

"I am much better. I shall never be quite well. But I hope to find my ailments less afflicting than formerly, when so much depended upon health and strength."

"And your daughter, the Norman *demoiselle*, is she well? I hoped to have seen her attired as becomes a daughter of the house of High Vert."

"Thyrza, I thank you, is quite well. Oh, here she is, to speak for herself. Thyrza, this is Lord Hardyknute, who has kindly come to see us."

In a manner that was modest and humble, but at the same time entirely frank and unembarrassed, Thyrza came forward and greeted their noble visitor. "If staring were not rude, now," said he, "I should hardly take my eyes off you, Miss Knowles, so much

does your change of dress become you. I am afraid I cannot prefer the least claim to relationship with you, but there are many, much more distinguished than I am, who can do so, and who doubtless will be very proud, now, of their cousin."

And, in truth, the well-grown Thyrza, as she appeared to-day, clad like a gentlewoman, with her hair smoothly dressed, and disembarrassed of the basket or other encumbrance, with which of old she had generally been seen trudging, was a young person very well worth looking at. If her style had been remarkable when she was a peasant, it was doubly striking now. And her movements, free and natural, were irresistibly pleasing. Even a "lord of Parliament" might be excused for desiring to feast his eyes upon her. Lord Hardyknute had called simply to say a kind word on the recovery of the property, but when he saw how quiet and pleasant both women were—perhaps, too, when he saw what a fine girl Thyrza was—he thought he might do a kind act as well as make a civil speech. He therefore, after he had admired the room they were in, the pretty garden outside, and the cheerful view from the windows, and approved of the house generally, said rather abruptly—

"I hope some of your relations have come to rejoice with you, now that you have got an estate."

To which the widow replied, "Very few of them

indeed ; we have made but a small acquaintance, and we could hardly expect it to be otherwise. We are the same people who lived as your lordship's pensioners in St Ann's Cottage, although our poverty is not the same."

"They ought to seek you out, and I have no doubt they will. Yes—certainly they will. But, in the meantime, would it be agreeable to you if my cousin were to call? You know I am a bachelor myself (more's the pity); and my cousin has no mother. But I am certain she will have pleasure in becoming acquainted with you."

It had been the hidden, chief desire of Mrs Knowles's life to be acquainted with people of gentle birth ; and she was not slow, therefore, in gratefully accepting the proffered visit.

"My cousin," said Lord Hardyknute, "is named Emma Seward, and she is the daughter of Sir Eldred Seward, who lives at Ayresfield. I think her a very charming girl indeed, and I hope that your daughter will like her too."

All at once Mrs Knowles said, "What have you done with your horse, Lord Hardyknute? when you did me the honour to call before, you remember, Thyrza held——"

"Yes, I blush to remember it. Miss Knowles befriended me. But I have a groom with me now. I

am glad, however, of the reminder, for a particular reason. You said Miss Knowles was accustomed to horses, and fond of riding. Miss Seward is an excellent horsewoman, and perhaps they might ride together. There are horses in my stable that have been accustomed to carry ladies, and I shall be delighted to furnish Miss Knowles until she may have a horse of her own."

Calm and self-controlled as Thyrza generally was, she could not restrain a blush of delight at hearing this welcome offer. It was a common saying in that neighbourhood that Lord Hardyknute left sunshine behind him wherever he went; and it was never better exemplified than in this case. The mother and daughter seemed to come into their fortune over again—that is, they saw a train of advantages arising from it, of which they had never taken account at its first coming. It had been hailed as a relief: now it began to show itself as a bringer of un hoped-for gratifications. There was again a canvassing of the good points, moral and personal, of Lord Hardyknute, and a great deal of wondering and guessing as to Miss Seward, when she would come, what she would be like, and whether she would deign to maintain an acquaintance with such homely people as they were. The result of Lord Hardyknute's reflections on his visit may be very well learned from some remarks that he made next day

when calling at Sir Eldred Seward's place, Ayresfield.

"I saw such a fine, elegant girl yesterday," he said to his cousin.

"Did you?" answered Miss Seward. "What a number of admirable people you meet with! You see everybody's bright side, and give always a flattering report. I daresay your fine, elegant girl described by somebody else might be anything but attractive."

"Well, I shall be glad to hear your own opinion when you have seen her. Who do you think she is? You heard, of course, of that singular recovery of the Claybarrow property by the turning up of some lost parchments?"

"Oh yes; of course. Some very poor people were enriched by it, weren't they—mere peasants?"

"Some very poor people certainly, but not mere peasants. They are a widow and her daughter, descended, as you have doubtless heard, from one of the Earls of High Vert. The mother's late husband was not a gentleman, neither was her father; but by her mother's side she has the pure Norman blood. Indeed her grandmother was that Lady Thyrza Angevine, afterwards Valery, of whom you read in so many of the gossiping books of last century."

"Oh yes, I remember; that spirited woman who fired at the highwayman on Hounslow Heath."

“Ay, and wounded him too. Well, these women are gentle people in sentiment, and want only a little polish to be so in manner. The mother is really quite an agreeable woman ; and as for the daughter, she is—but I mustn’t describe her again ; she is the person for admiring whom I was checked very lately.”

“And how am I to form an opinion of this paragon?” asked Miss Seward. “Where is she to be seen?”

“She is living now at Beech Lodge, by Wyde. Their name is Knowles. You may see them both if you call there some day. I hope that you will do so. You will be pleased with them.”

“I ! call there ? Are you serious ?”

“Perfectly so, my charming cousin. I went there yesterday, and assured myself that they are people whose acquaintance could be no discredit to any one. I think that somebody ought to stretch out a hand to help them into good society. And as their blood relations don’t seem in any hurry to do that, I, as their former landlord, would be glad to aid them.”

“Since you wish it, Hardyknute, I will go and see them. I suppose papa will not object.”

“If he should there is no promise ; but I don’t think he will.”

“Well, may this turn out to be a wiser idea than some of your benevolent schemes !”

Sir Eldred Seward had no objection: Hardyknute never imagined that he would object. Emma Seward would have done a good deal more than call on Mrs Knowles to oblige her generous cousin. Accordingly, it was but two or three days after Lord Hardyknute's visit when Miss Seward drove to the door of Beech Lodge, and finding the inmates at home, went in and made their acquaintance. She was a year or two older than Thyrza Knowles, very unlike Thyrza, and yet exceedingly attractive. Her hair was auburn, her skin fair and smooth; her person was soft and rounded, without being at all stout; her hands and feet were small and finely formed. Of medium height, and always tastefully dressed, she was sure to be a remarkable figure in a group; but it was her winning smile, and the look that beamed from her blue eyes, that made captive all them on whom she shed the least modicum of her favour. To the Knowleses she was charmingly kind and unassuming. She was agreeably surprised to find Thyrza so little tainted with vulgarity. The impression she made was strong, and most agreeable. When they talked over her visit after she left them, they could not help remarking how like in manner and in sentiment she was to Lord Hardyknute. The first two friends whom they made among the upper classes certainly gave them the idea that to associate with that class was an immense privilege.

In due time Mrs and Miss Knowles went as guests to Ayresfield, and also to Malmseymead, which was the name of Lord Hardyknute's seat. Thyrza and Miss Seward went out together on horseback. Miss Seward was warming towards Thyrza; she had first improved the acquaintance to gratify Lord Hardyknute, but now she began to cultivate it for her own sake. Thus adopted, the handsome Miss Knowles was not long in being much spoken of, and in being sought by some of her own kin. It was by this process that she attained to the position which was mentioned above. It scarcely needs to be stated that not the least of her satisfactions at being among well-informed people was the power of knowing accurately what had been going on at the seat of war. Besides having all the despatches and the newspaper comments thereon to read, she had the advantage of hearing much that was said by persons who had the best means of acquiring information, and who were well qualified to appreciate what they heard—persons who all had relations or intimate friends with the army, and who were therefore deeply interested in the course of events.

“Oh, mother!” exclaimed she, coming suddenly into the room where her mother was seated, one morning. “Mother, have you seen this?”

“Seen what? Why, bless you, Thyrza, what is the matter? Sit down, my child; are you ill?”

“No, mother ; but this news !”

Now Mrs Knowles felt quite as one who has nothing to dread in the way of news. That was one good result of having had much tribulation. She had very few interests but what she now saw to be safe. If the property had again been in danger, she knew very well that Thyrza would have behaved much more philosophically than she was now doing. There was therefore no danger in that direction. Accordingly, after she had seated her daughter on a couch, she spoke as not much alarmed by Thyrza’s alarm.

“Did you not see the list of killed and wounded ?” almost gasped poor Thyrza, who was white and trembling.

“I saw a long list, as is only too usual,” said Mrs Knowles ; “but I remarked nothing particular.”

“He is not among the killed, thank God ! but oh, he is severely wounded !” and Thyrza’s voice broke in the middle of this sentence, and at the end of it her tears burst forth. “Oh, how dreadful it is !”

Mrs Knowles, having caressed Thyrza for a while, till the weeping became calm and seemed to relieve her, took up the paper and referred to the list of casualties. There she soon perceived that Captain du Lys had been severely wounded in the arm. She read on then, and took in the meaning of another paragraph

which Thyrza's emotion had prevented her from reaching. "Ho, ho!" thought the matron, "there is mischief here. I never thought her fancy had amounted to anything like this." It was only the degree of interest that Mrs Knowles objected to; she did not wholly object to a tender regard, in moderation, being cast by Thyrza towards the young aristocrat who had befriended her.

"Only think!" said she, bending over her daughter; "he may be quite sound again by this time, and getting more honour. The disaster has not been for nothing, it would seem. You cannot have seen this other paragraph, I fancy."

"What other paragraph?" asked Thyrza, looking up with a start and holding her tears in suspense. "A du Lys!" thought the widow, as Thyrza turned her neck and asked with her eyes for information, "a royal prince might be proud to awaken her interest." Then she said aloud, "Why, just listen; I am sure this ought to be some consolation: "On Tuesday night the Russians sallied in great force, with the intention, it is thought, of levelling some of our advanced works from which they apprehend serious injury. The sortie was well planned, and would have been successful but for the promptitude and bravery evinced by Captain du Lys of the Guards, who was in charge of the foremost working-party. On the first alarm, and without

waiting for the enemy's onset, he with his little party charged gallantly over the half-made parapet, arresting the assailants, and holding them at bayonets'-point till the guard of the trenches came up and completed the enemy's discomfiture. It was a decidedly dashing thing, and we doubt not the detachment will be duly credited with it. It was, of course, not achieved without some loss. We had several killed and wounded (though not near so many as the enemy), and we regret to add that Captain du Lys was severely wounded in the arm, though it is hoped that the accident will not long withdraw him from the front, where his services have been found so valuable.' There, now, is not that something of a set off?"

"Oh, mother," Thyrza cried, smiling now through her tears, "indeed, indeed it is! Oh, how noble! how grand! Ah, I knew it! I was sure!" Then presently she added—"They have plenty of good doctors to attend to the wounded, haven't they? Oh, he can never have been seriously injured, when doing such a glorious thing!" Even Mrs Knowles saw that this was not very accurate reasoning; but as it seemed to soothe Thyrza, she did not combat it. Thyrza read over the paragraph again and again; was more exercised with delight and anxiety than she had often allowed herself to be before; was a long time in growing composed; but was pretty well mistress of

herself again by the hour when she had engaged to accompany Emma Seward in a ride.

Said Thyrza as they rode along, "What terrible news this is from the Crimea!"

"Not worse than ordinary, I think," Emma replied; "indeed, it is rather good news on the whole. We have had a small success."

"But at what a cost!" remarked Thyrza.

"I don't understand," Emma said, quietly. "We lost much fewer men than the enemy, and their design was entirely frustrated. By the by, Captain du Lys did very gallantly, didn't he?"

Thyrza was prepared for this, and had made herself strong in her saddle. "He did," said she; "but how shockingly he has been wounded!"

"Not so very dreadfully, I believe. They say at the Tower of Lys that his letter is quite reassuring. They are not at all alarmed; and then, Lord Hardyknute says, he is sure to be promoted."

"Promoted!" echoed Thyrza. "Oh, I am so delighted!"

Emma looked at her companion—"You know Captain du Lys, I suppose, my dear?"

"Yes. That is to say," added Thyrza, correcting herself, and becoming somewhat embarrassed, "I couldn't know him except as a very poor girl, as I was; but he has spoken to me."

“And his words made some impression, if I can judge rightly of such a matter.”

Thyrza's colour rose, but she steadied her voice bravely as she said, “You know we used to see him every day in Brigend, and could not help noticing him; besides, he was very kind to us, now nearly twelve months since, and helped to get a doctor for my mother when I thought we should hardly save her. I am very sorry indeed to hear of his wound. I am glad to find it isn't dangerous.”

“I assure you, my dear,” said Emma, kindly, “that my cousin, and my father too, both of whom know Captain du Lys very well, and would greatly regret any serious mischance that could befall him, have been speaking of him to-day as an exceedingly lucky fellow.”

“But Lord Hardyknute, perhaps, is thinking altogether of the honourable result—the promised promotion. He might take a different view if he had to fight himself, and to struggle with desperate Russians in a dark night, and if he had his arm cut and torn, from his body it may be.”

“God forbid!” said Emma Seward, devoutly; and as she spoke the colour for a moment quite left her cheeks. But it came again in a second. “We must not,” then she said, “cross these delightful downs without a canter: come!” and away they went.

Du Lys's exploit was, naturally enough, the theme

of many conversations in the Vert district: thus Thyrza had the opportunity of hearing it extensively celebrated. She was relieved, too, by the tone in which everybody spoke of his wound. It would lay him up for a while; but the rest, perhaps, would do as much good to his frame generally as the injury would do evil. And he had certainly begun to make for himself a name. Who could say how honourable a name it might hereafter be? And then, after a day or two, du Lys was gazetted a major, for distinguished service, and his name was put in a prominent place in all the newspapers in the kingdom, and until the next interesting event was recorded, he was the reigning hero. At the same time, it became known that he had gone to the shores of the Bosphorus to recruit his health. Thyrza had before this persuaded herself that he would recover from his wound; and now she had the comfort of knowing that he was, for the present, out of the way of farther harm.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HERO IN A SCRAPE.

WHILE the fortunes of Thyrza Knowles were thus smiling at home, du Lys was once more in camp, and actively employed. He was greatly shocked at the changes which had occurred during his absence. They were not greater than usually happened in the same period; but instead of noting each day's casualties as they occurred, he had now to behold at one view the changes which many days had made. His thinking time, however, was now again restricted, and he had to harden his mind to facts as best he might. Before he was long back his promotion came out. His wound was healed, and his general health much improved, so that he had every reason to rejoice. It is, however, a truth very much to be regretted that Major du Lys had now, for the present, reached the height of his prosperity; and this truth is only the more regrettable for that his career was interrupted through what we

must call his own wilfulness. The privations of our army were at this time very great; and, as has since become well known, although a great many of the wants were due to the necessary stores not having been despatched from home, yet a great many more were certainly caused by the want of transport. Comforts and necessaries which had been brought, as it were, to the very doors, could not be made use of because there were not means of bringing them to camp. Horribly bad roads and a great deficiency of carriages were evils difficult to deal with. The men had hard enough work in their harassing siege and camp duties; and yet the poor fellows had to be very fatiguingly employed in supplementing by manual labour the miserable provision of transport. Happy were the mounted men who could go down to the harbour at Balaklava and bring up each at least a horse's burden of food or some indispensable store. The infantry soldiers, with trucks and hand-barrows, or with loads on their backs, had to trudge through the slush with much distress.

Now it chanced that on a day not very long after du Lys's return to camp he was ordered to the coast with a strong party to bring up certain indispensable stores. The weather was about as miserable as could well be; a cutting wind, a gloomy sky, and occasional showers of sleet. There was no trace of a road. The ground between the camp and the sea was a mere

quagmire. Even had there been a better supply of carts, they could not have been moved through the slough. Du Lys, with his party, set off in no very good humour. This was one of the duties which he particularly disliked, and regarded as impositions. It was a very different thing from encountering the enemy in the trenches. If the work of pack-horses was to be done by men, why, he thought, could not a train of porters be attached to the army? Was this what men enlisted into the Guards for—to tramp through mud reaching to their knees, laden like beasts of burden? And to employ officers in this way, was it a duty for gentlemen? If he had fancied that sort of drudgery he would have joined the Commissariat department, not the Guards. By Jove, these newspaper men, though they were laying it on pretty strong in many directions, were not half severe enough on this misuse of trained soldiers, every man of whom had cost the country a round sum! The men of his detachment also, although they knew that there were no means of getting up supplies unless they carried them themselves, grumbled pretty audibly, and were not checked. They considered themselves “put upon.” They toiled away down to the landing-stages, however, comforted a little by tobacco as they went; and on arriving were set to work, as were many another party, in receiving from the different issuers the stores

to which they were entitled, and in separating or uniting them into burdens suitable for hand-carriage. Everybody was out of humour; the cold, the disagreeable work, the confusion and scrambling, were too much for their tempers.

While amenities of different kinds were proceeding among the soldiers, du Lys, who thought that he made an immense sacrifice to discipline in being on the spot at all, took not the smallest pains to look after his men, but let the duty take care of itself as best it could. He had not been long on the spot before he encountered another officer, a Captain Henniker, similarly employed to himself, and feeling about as much interest as he did in the employment. The two, after they had on meeting exchanged a few commonplaces, joined in hearty maledictions on the weather, duly denounced the "infernal shame" of sending two such heroes as they to do the Commissariat duties, got into a wretched hut, which had probably been used as an office by some store clerk before the weather became so bad, and smoked and talked to beguile the time until they should be able to leave their irksome task.

"Good cigar this," remarked Henniker, who had accepted a weed from du Lys. "How the devil did you get it? I can't come at anything decent."

"They are abominably coarse about camp," returned du Lys; "glad I had a tolerable one to offer you on

such a day. You remember I am not long back from sick leave. Haven't finished the stock I got at Constantinople yet."

"Ah! by Jove, yes! Had you any trouble in getting them there?"

"Well, a good deal. More, probably, than I should, as an invalid, have cared to take, only I had to find some for an acceptable offering for old Wiggy Warner; you know who he is?"

"By heaven, I should think I do! Why, the old sinner was at Gib with me before the war. We came on from Gib, you know."

"Remarkable old fellow. Not unaccommodating, though."

"No: I believe Wiggy would do many civil things from mere good nature; for a material consideration he is a certain benefactor."

"We had a good deal of heavyish entertainment with him. Do you know, I thought latterly that underneath that sensual exterior that he parades there lie some genuine feelings stowed away, eh?" observed du Lys.

"Deep feelings! Ah, I daresay. What line of sentiment?"

"Oh, you know, I fancied he had been unfortunate: ill-used by the service; disappointed in his family; cruelly used by his wife."

“ Ah, I know something of the last, or of one instance of it ; I believe there were many. There was a big-gish scandal at Plymouth some years ago. In it figured Krimkon, a fellow that married the daughter of somebody on the Staff, and has had a run of good appointments since. They said there wasn't a man in garrison that didn't know of the affair, and only one that didn't openly show his knowledge of it. That one was Warner himself.”

“ Poor fellow ! ”

“ That wasn't exactly what people said. They made a considerable row, and Wiggy had to change his regiment. He's been in about twenty, first and last. Always manages an exchange somehow.”

“ Why shouldn't he have exchanged ? ”

“ Well, the story goes that he bore his wrongs rather meekly. Indeed they said more than that.”

“ You are not serious, surely ? ”

“ I am speaking seriously to you, du Lys, and I believe all that I am repeating. As to his being ill-used by the service, the service has the most reason to complain. He is one of those transgressors who injure none but themselves, consequently upon whom nobody cares particularly to be down ; so they come off scot free from twenty scrapes, any one of which would have ruined an honourable man. I wonder at you, my friend, having been humbugged by this old impostor.”

“I hadn’t the advantage, you see, of being at Gibraltar and Plymouth—didn’t know, in fact, that the world held a Wiggy Warner till I went down to the Straits the other day. But, I say, tell me why they call the old boy ‘The Four Seas;’ what the deuce has he to do with the four seas?”

“Oh, that’s a very old appellation. It’s the four C.’s, you know (letter C, not the salt water). It was short for his four cardinal requirements, which are understood to be Cayenne, Cavendish, Cognac, and Calomel!”

“Hah, hah, by Jove! I see now what it means. Shocking old rogue! Well, at any rate he made my convalescence more agreeable than it might have been under some of them, and I shall owe him a good turn for that.”

“Exactly. There’s always some fellow turning up whom he has obliged at the expense of the service, to say nothing of still more disreputable accommodations; and when the sword is hanging over his head, he gets spoken for, and escapes to repeat his dirty tricks. Don’t, du Lys, if the chance ever comes your way, help to screen such an old rascal. He’s a disgrace to the service. Now I’ll tell you——”

“If ye please, gentlemen, which is Major du Lys?” asked an orderly, coming in and saluting. It was a most irritating interruption, for the conversation had

got quite pleasant, and was making the interlocutors forget their annoyances.

"I am," said du Lys, not very graciously. "What do you want?"

"The kurrnol on juty 'ud be glad to spake wid ye, surr."

"Pshaw! what the devil does he want? Well, say I'll be down immediately. Where is he?"

"That's him, surr, sittin' on the porrk bar'l yonder, taking the boul of hot stirabout the drummer's bringing him."

Du Lys left his friend and sauntered down to the wharf, where he found the field-officer who had commanded his presence something in the case of a cat that has been stealing cream. His beard and moustache were white and dripping with fluid oatmeal, he having just solaced himself with a pull at the brose as the young officer came up. A weather-beaten, wiry old customer he looked. He set down his bowl, wiped his mouth, not at all elaborately, with a cotton handkerchief which he pulled from his bosom, and then said—

"Ye'll be the officer in charge of this party of the Guards, I presume?" Du Lys bowed assent. "Then do ye not think, sir, that you'd be better employed in overlooking your men and seeing that they did their work than in keeping out of the way like this?"

“I was close at hand, sir, I assure you, and could have been on the spot in a second if there had been any irregularity. As long as there’s nothing wrong I should only be in the way here, for I don’t pretend to know anything about loading and carrying and that sort of thing. Is there anything, sir, that you wish me to do; I understand that you sent for me?”

“Sent for ye, sir! Ay, I did. Your men are doing just no work at all. And they’re quarrelling with everybody round, and interrupting and hindering other soldiers who are willing to be useful.”

“I really don’t think, sir,” answered du Lys, “that the men understand this kind of fatigue any better than I do myself. We’ve never been instructed in it. I don’t wonder that they’re awkward.”

Hereupon the colonel rose from off his barrel, and gave his mouth a more careful wipe with the handkerchief, evidently intending that his dignity should not be compromised by the adherent oatmeal.

“I thought better of them, sir, and of you too,” he said. “If you can’t be of any other use, you can keep your detachment from wrangling and yelling, and make them listen to the directions of the people who are trying to teach them. It quite surprises me to see any officer take matters so coolly, when the needs of the whole army are so great. Be so good, sir, as to remain near your men, to keep them reasonably silent, and to

enforce attention to the directions given by the Commissariat officers."

Du Lys was moving off looking frightfully aggrieved, when the colonel called him back. "Just one moment," said he, "as ye're a young hand. If ye remain on active service, ye'll find there's a quantity o' work to do that's not in the drill-book, and that's not pleasant. I can't say that I particularly like the duty I'm on to-day myself; but it must be done, and if ye'll take an old soldier's advice, ye'll just kindly bend your back to the burden. Temper and indifference cannot possibly do good, but they may do much harm to others, and yourself as well. Now make the best of a bad business. That's wisest."

The dignity of Major du Lys was heinously outraged. Not only had this old porridge-eating colonel rated him and broken off his *tête-à-tête* with Henniker; he had absolutely insulted him with his fatherly advice, the wretched old man! Who the devil was he? The leader of some grabby regiment, probably. What could he know of what was due to the Guards, the pompous old wretch? Du Lys did not deign to make any remark in reply to the exhortation, but gave a curve of the forefinger of his right hand about as high as his breast, by way of as sparing a salute as it was safe to venture upon, and strode off.

By-and-by came the Commissariat officer to the

colonel to say that he hoped blame would not be ascribed to him ; he was doing all he possibly could to get the stores away. That party yonder (indicating du Lys's detachment) were not yet ready to start, and they could not be induced to attend to anything that was told them. They were seizing continually on the stores of other corps, and leaving their own blocking everybody's way. He had spoken to the officer in charge of them (who was a field-officer), and had received from him a very short, ungracious reply. He didn't know what to do. The colonel said that *he* didn't know what to do for the minute. The perversity of these men would result in inconvenience and loss to their comrades and themselves. He saw that the fault was not with the Commissariat. The detachment in question would, probably, be a little more brisk when they found it getting late. Meanwhile, it would be better to attend to the other detachments, and get them away as fast as might be. "A d——d deal too bad," said the colonel to himself. "I think I'll see if that young gentleman's grandeur can't be toned down a little. He wants to be a hard bargain."

The reader will kindly remember, as he reads this account of the follies of du Lys and of some of his friends, that this is a book of the history of his family specially ; therefore, that which is a most trifling

episode in the events of the siege assumes here unnaturally large proportions, because he was a prominent actor in it. The distinguished services rendered by the brigade of Guards in the Crimean war, and the valour and devotion of its officers and men, were conspicuous, and stand recorded in their country's annals. Du Lys was but a unit in this heroic band; but in the chronicles of his own house the foibles and peculiarities of others which affected *his* fortunes are made to appear as if they were glaring faults, while the glory which eclipses such lapses is hardly recognised. But to our story.

When du Lys's detachment had amused itself by perplexing everything and setting everybody at defiance, and thus asserted its claim to consideration, it was perceived that there was no fun in remaining longer at Balaklava. As the old colonel had foreseen, they set to work when they thought proper, and made a push back to camp, where Major du Lys was very eloquent concerning his wrongs to everybody he met. The next day he had somewhat recovered from his ill-humour, but still indulged in growls at intervals. He heard a good deal of grumbling too, about the shortness of some supplies in his own corps. Every other regiment in camp, it was said, was better supplied than theirs. Whether he at all connected this shortness of the supplies with

the ill-conduct of his detachment yesterday, is not clearly known; if he did, he hardened his heart, and continued to parade the fatigue duty as a grievance. At night he was on duty in the trenches, and had other occupation than brooding over the iniquitous way in which the service was conducted; and when he came in, he was very glad to lie down and rest. Indeed, the store duty was pretty well out of his head.

He was, however, destined to hear rather more of it than was exactly agreeable. Just as he got tired of it, other tiresome people began to entertain it and to discuss it, as he thought, to a nauseous extent. They seemed to be informed with a spirit as accommodating as that of Hotspur, when, finding the name of Mortimer disagreeable to his sovereign, he swore he would bawl it into his ears as he lay asleep, and that he would have a starling taught to say "Mortimer" to foment the ire of the monarch. Du Lys was disturbed from his repose by a message requesting that he would present himself in the orderly-room hut of his regiment. On repairing thither he found the adjutant awaiting him, who said, "Look here, du Lys, what are we to say about this? The colonel's annoyed. Just consider it," and he handed to du Lys a sheet or two of foolscap officially written over, and went on with the business on which he had previously been engaged.

Du Lys took the papers and began to read them. The outside one was from the department of the chief of the Staff, enclosing a letter and asking for an explanation of the circumstances named therein. The enclosure was signed *Hector Mackecknie, colonel*, and contained a complaint of the extreme carelessness and neglect of duty of a detachment of the battalion which had been employed two days since in receiving and carrying stores from the wharf. It stated, also, that the improper conduct of the party was principally due to the indifference displayed by the officer in charge of it, who did not in the least exert himself to make the men do their duty, and who, after being remonstrated with by the writer, still allowed the work to be performed with remarkable remissness. The major's indignation waxed very hot as he read on, and was at boiling-point by the time that he had finished it. "Curse this old villain's impudence!" was his first observation.

"Amen," said the adjutant. "But what are we to say? You, of course, don't admit the neglect."

"The men worked as hard as I thought necessary. They have plenty of military duty to do without being employed as pack-horses. What the deuce is it to this meddling old person how the thing was done?"

"Only that I suppose it was his duty to see all the fatigues at the wharf properly executed. And, I say,

by the by, they've been saying that some of the other regiments made two turns to our one; and we are most confoundedly short here, without doubt. However, as I asked before, what is to be said? that's the question."

"Well, I think the thing should be treated with contempt. Rather I should like stopping this impudent old fellow's mouth, and letting him see that nobody's going to put up with interference of this kind. By Jove, I don't know what we're coming to!"

"Unfortunately, this has come through the chief of the Staff, and can't, in its present stage, be treated as a personal matter. Will you explain or excuse the affair, or what will you do?"

"I don't think I shall say anything. It's of no consequence. Let the matter take its course."

"My dear fellow, something *must* be said. The correspondence will be referred to you for any remarks that you may have to offer, and you must make the best case that you can. There's no sense in making the business worse than it is."

Du Lys took off the packet in an exceedingly vicious humour, kept it until he got an official reminder that it remained unanswered, and then sent in a reply so absurd and intemperate that no commanding-officer who felt his responsibility would have thought of sending it on. His colonel sent for du Lys and asked

him whether he had not a proper defence to make; and if so, why he did not make it. He could not get the direct answer that he sought, but it seemed presumable, from what du Lys did choose to say, that his duty had been negligently and improperly performed, and that because he chose to think it a duty which ought not to have been required of him. It thus seemed likely that whether du Lys's improper reply should be forwarded, or whether no adequate defence should be offered, the result would be a censure on the corps, procured by the report of a weather-beaten old officer utterly unknown to the Household. This was a thing not to be thought of by du Lys's friends and supporters. For a battalion of Guards to be reproved at the instance of an officer utterly unknown, in the sense in which that expression (unknown) is often used by exclusive bodies, would, in their opinion, have brought all order to a standstill, to say nothing of stopping the earth in its course and bringing on innumerable convulsions of nature. Such a thing must not be. The eternal fitness of things would not consist with it. Every right-thinking man—that is, every man with very aristocratic views of military matters—saw that this trumpery business had grown to be a very serious affair. Like that diphthong against which the historian Gibbon shows such just resentment, or the apple which fell in sight of Newton, it

might be the seed of a revolution the most tremendous.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the right course would have been to insist on Major du Lys confessing his delinquency and promising that it should not be repeated; or, if he remained obstinate, to hand him over to the vengeance of the law. But, as we have seen, the stomach of caste revolted against either of these courses being followed on the motion of old Mackechnie. All that was known of that veteran was, that he might be thoroughly depended upon to carry out any service with which he might be intrusted; that he had had the luck in respect of promotion which often follows hard-working officers when they happen to be conscientious and modest, and that he had risen very slowly in the service; that his means were scanty, and his connections not such as were deemed a certificate of character in South Britain, whatever they may have passed for among his native mountains. It was impossible to think of such a thing as allowing the case to take its just and regular course. The busy spirits of the battalion concerned were greatly exercised about it; so were other officers of similarly elevated notions. It soon got beyond the brigade of Guards. Many regiments sympathised strongly with du Lys's battalion of Guards in this most trying emergency—some gave them only

a fellow-feeling more or less moderate; but it may be said with certainty that there was not a regiment wherein some one or two did not side with the cruelly afflicted Guards, and that many of the Staff condoled with them cordially. A desire to screen du Lys was said to exist in a very high quarter. Here and there in the army were of course some of those impracticable, pestilent spirits who would not consider the dignity of the Guards, and who prated about right, and impartiality, and suchlike inflammatory sentiments, reckless of the mischief which their unguarded vehemence might create. These were mad enough to stand up for Colonel Mackechnie, and to declare that a shock would be given to discipline, and that the feelings of the whole service would be outraged, if Mackechnie were not supported, and if the peccant Guardsman were not brought to his knees in some way. If, said they, it had been some friendless officer in a slow regiment, no measure would have been thought too hard for him. But these malcontents were fortunately a minority (so said du Lys's party), only strong enough to make their murmurs audible, but not strong enough to set up law and justice in opposition to prescription and illicit influence.

Thus a question which was officially understood to form only the subject of a minor correspondence in a restricted province of the service, was in reality universally known and discussed by the army at large.

It was the opinion of the most discreet and sagacious military mentors that it would have to be compromised. Impossible, said they, to cushion Mackechnie's report altogether; equally impossible that the Guards should in any way go to the wall. Mackechnie must be quieted somehow; his complaint must be withdrawn; he might be given privately to understand that a scandal such as he had witnessed should not occur again: but as for his obtaining any public and official support in his endeavours to carry on the duty satisfactorily, that must never be. There were extremists of course; some of them for utterly trampling upon old Mackechnie for his presumption—others screaming *fiat justitia*, and so on. But little by little, men began to see the wisdom of those pundits who advised a compromise, and gradually the bulk of the disputants gravitated to their school. Mackechnie must be talked to and reasoned with. He must be brought to see the presumptuous error of which he had been guilty. Discipline, of course, was the sole rock and foundation of the army; no man would be so insane as to call that in question. Discipline, it might be taken for certain, would never be openly set at nought. Only the rude old Scotchman must open his mind to the idea that there is something higher than discipline—that, where influential and highly-connected officers are concerned, their feelings and their supe-

riority are the first things to be considered, and the enforcement of discipline (which, be it remembered, everybody respects in the highest degree) becomes not only uncalled-for and absurd, but positively wicked. The good intentions of Mackechnie were to be fully recognised, and every respect was to be professed for his rank and services; only, as his career had been chiefly in out-of-the-way places where nothing but hard work was going on, and as he never before had enjoyed the advantage of being in immediate contact with the Household troops, it would be well that he should know that a little discrimination should be observed in conducting duties. It was quite true that the Mutiny Act and Articles of War did not respect persons or regiments, and that the "Queen's Regulations" respected them very little; yet, for all that, there was a paramount, unwritten law, known to most officers of experience, which showed the application of the written law indifferently to all persons and to all branches of the service to be an absurdity. This unlucky report having been made, discipline required that action should in some manner be taken on it. On the other hand, the unwritten law, already referred to, could by no means tolerate the taking of such action. Thus the two laws were in collision. It would be inexpedient to violate the one or the other: what, then, could be done to avoid

chafing the dignity of either? Clearly, the reasonable course would be for Colonel Mackechnie to withdraw his ill-advised report. This would relieve discipline of an invidious and impossible task, and would satisfy regimental honour. At the same time—supposing Mackechnie, after having been reasoned with, to follow the rational course now recommended—an assurance might be given that the little frolic of the Guard's detachment would not be repeated, and that officers in charge of fatigue-parties would be most strictly enjoined to see the duty intrusted to them accurately and properly performed.

So far good. Now, then, how was the matter (which was seen to be a somewhat delicate one) to be practically dealt with? How? Why, of course, du Lys's sympathisers knew very well how to work it—and this was their method: An officer was deputed to pay Mackechnie a visit. He was in military rank quite equal to the old Scotchman; and there was a handle to his name, and M.P. was written after it: a devilish pleasant, polite, fluent, plausible fellow was Sir Digby Prestige, Bart., M.P. He flattered himself that he could be all things to all men; and he set off to talk over old Mackechnie, rather pleased to find an occasion, amid the hard, rough dealings of the camp, for exercising his diplomatic talents.

Mackechnie resided in a hut, of which he had him-

self been the architect and the principal builder. The venerable pile was formed of the torn timbers of ships and boats which had come to grief in the harbour, and was framed, fixed, and sheeted in a manner which no shipwright, joiner, or hedge-carpenter would have owned. In form and in its various styles it was as irregular as some of those structures at home which, having been founded in Saxon or British times, have been added to or altered in every century from that date to this ; it was, like Noah's ark, pitched within and without in some places ; and, like less elaborate edifices, it had in other places its chinks stopped with rags or clay ; after many disappointments it had been rendered tolerably weather-proof ; and it was lighted by an old bull's-eye or two which had been inserted with not over-scrupulous neatness, and very promiscuously, in its sides and roof.

The light not being very glaring within the hut, and Colonel Mackechnie's eyes being none the stronger for the tropical suns, the West India hurricanes, and the Newfoundland fogs, to which they had in past time been exposed, he was making but slow progress, though aided by a pair of powerful spectacles, in spelling out from an English newspaper an account of a sharp little action which had occurred a month ago. The ignorance and untruth shown in this narration were exercising the old officer's temper, and he was giving

vent to interjections not benevolent in tone, and rather coarse, as he read along. He was so much interested in detecting this misrepresentation that he was unconscious of any one having entered the hut until a powerful voice close to his ear said, "Here's a card for ye, sir. There's a man waiting without."

"Hech! what? What d'ye want? Give it me. What the de'il! Who's this?" said he. "Sir Digby Prestige; what will the like o' him be wanting with me? There's some finesse intended here. However, let's see. Ask Sir Digby—that's the officer, ye see—to walk in." And, with a step not so firm as it once had been, he moved toward the entrance of his mansion to receive his visitor. "Your servant, Sir Digby Prestige," said he; "pray walk in. I have not, I think, had the honour of meeting ye before."

"My dear Colonel Mackechnie," returned Sir Digby, "I think you must be mistaken. I think it impossible that we have not met. Indeed I should feel it a reproach to have been three or four months in camp with an officer so distinguished as yourself, and not to have made his acquaintance. The duties really keep men apart here in an extraordinary way." By the time this was said, Sir Digby Prestige had seated himself on a stool which his host had placed for him. Mackechnie made no audible reply beyond a grunt to these complimentary observations. Inaudibly he

said, "D——d humbug;" then leaving his *aside*, "Will ye let me offer ye a glass of wine, Sir Digby, after your walk? I'm sorry to say there's not much variety, but the sherry's nō' that bad."

"Thanks, many thanks, my dear sir, but I take very little wine."

"Just like myself. Wine's just of no use here. When I tak' anything, I tak' something with a meaning in it. I've some whisky here. Let me recommend a dram."

"Dear me! spirits! no—thank you very much. That was not at all what I meant. I never—but whisky, did you say? Ah, that isn't always to be got pure. Out of your bottle, my dear sir, I do feel tempted to taste the whisky. But with a little water, please."

"Then ye'll just destroy it."

"Oh dear, I hope not; weaken the exquisite flavour slightly perhaps, but not destroy, certainly not." And Sir Digby took a sip of the whisky with a steady countenance.

"Fine indeed; very fine," said he, as if in soliloquy.

"I'll drink your health in the pure spirit," observed Mackechnie.

"Isla whisky, I should think. Egad, it's quite a cordial!" rejoined the Guardsman.

"No, it's not Isla. It's more the flavour of Glenlivat.

But, ye see, this is not preceesely one of the special kinds known to commairce. It's distilled on a bit property that's belonged to our hoose, it may be twenty centuries—but that's neither here nor there—and with every opportunity I get just a drop sent out. The stock is very low at present, or I would request your acceptance of a bottle."

"Indeed, my dear sir, you are much too good. A treasure like that, so difficult to come by, is not to be rashly parted with. But now, to leave that very pleasant subject—I dote on the Highlands. Have shot and fished there for many years: look upon it almost as a home. Many a fine salmon have I taken out of the braes——"

"Fish out of the braes! Ye'll be a claiver sportsman!"

"Well, not altogether a bungler, I believe; but, as I was saying, I must not longer indulge myself in speaking of that subject, for I have another to talk about, and must not presume to occupy too much of your time."

Mackechnie bowed and settled himself in an attentive attitude.

"You are aware, my dear sir, that you lately thought you had reason to make a complaint of a detachment of our battalion which was employed in transporting stores."

“Ay, I did.”

“Of course observations coming from so distinguished a quarter received every possible attention, and I am happy to inform you that steps will be taken such as will prevent the possibility of such an irregularity being repeated.”

“Well,” said Mackechnie, “I’m right glad to hear that, Sir Digby.”

“Naturally: I felt sure you would be, my dear sir; and, seeing that the object which you had in view has been attained, it has been thought by some of my brother officers and myself that you would scarcely wish the affair to proceed any farther.”

“I’m not thinking of taking any farther step regarding it. Ye’ve no proceeding of mine to expect.”

“Certainly, my dear sir—no *farther* proceeding; I quite understand. But, as I need not explain to you, a correspondence of that kind once begun, proceeds by custom in the official course without any fresh impetus from the original mover.”

“Ay. I thought from what ye just noo said that its course was run and its end had been reached.”

“Its end has been reached, in so far that there will never be occasion for another report of the kind. But it is not yet through all the tedious official grooves; and I was going to remark to you that, as the desired amendment has been produced more quickly than the

letter could travel through its appointed stages—as it has taken effect by anticipation, as I may say—you will scarcely deem it necessary that its official existence should continue.”

“What I deem, or any other body deems, is of little consequence. The letter is a fact; and I confess I cannot see how you propose to make it otherwise. There’s a routine to be followed.”

“Assuredly. And, my dear sir, we do not imagine that we can do anything to interrupt the routine of which you have spoken. We are powerless, but *you* are not.”

“I really do not understand ye, Sir Digby. The affair is quite oot of my hands.”

“Well, that is as you feel inclined. I have no doubt—that is, I have some reason to believe—that no objection would be made in the highest quarters to the affair being allowed to subside, provided you make no objection.”

“Oh, it’ll subside, never fear; and ye may rely on it that I shall do nothing to revive it unless (which you tell me is impossible) any fresh neglect should occur in a situation where I may be responsible.”

“My dear sir, in feeling you quite meet our views, as from your known kindness and good sense I anticipated that you would. But practically, as a matter of business, some little action on your part would be

required in order that effect might be given to your courteous intentions. You know the wooden routine in which all these questions are immersed. If you would be at the great trouble of saying that after the explanations you have heard you do not wish the correspondence to proceed any farther—indeed, that you desire to cancel the complaint—the thing would really be at an end.”

“That is, I suppose,” answered Mackechnie, whose voice was only a little sterner than it had been in the preceding part of the conversation, although his features worked, and his cheeks and forehead grew very brown—“that is, I suppose, that I am expected to withdraw my complaint. Ye’ve shown me no reason why I should comply with so extraordinary a request.”

“Pardon me, my dear colonel, I thought I had explained that, as to the cause of complaint, order would be taken to prevent its recurrence, and that you are asked to take this step out of consideration for the feelings of a battalion which is very unused to incurring animadversion. A simple request from you will be sufficient.”

“And let me tell ye, Sir Digby, that there’s not the smallest chance of such a request being made. My complaint might have been much stronger than it was. The duty was trifled with in a manner that it was impossible for me to overlook. I remonstrated

with the officer in charge, and did all I could to make him attend, and got scarcely ceevil—certainly not respectful—behaviour in return.”

“Whatever you may have had to complain of, you will remember, was the fault of one officer. You are surely not on his account going to disappoint the wishes and disregard the feelings of the majority of the officers of a battalion of her Majesty’s Household troops!”

Mackechnie’s blood was getting very hot. “I would remind ye, sir,” he said, “that I did not come to the Crimea to consult the wishes or the feelings of her Majesty’s Household troops, but to do my duty to my country, and to make others do it too when they come under my control. I did not send forward that report until I was thoroughly convinced that for the good of the sairvice I was bound to send it; and he’ll be a clever man that will induce me noo to unsay what I have said. So much for the offeecal aspect of the affair. But ye’ve hinted, Sir Digby, at wounded feelings, and your remarks all through this conversation have seemed to me to convey that I am thought to have taken an unwarrantable liberty in having presumed to complain of anything which the detachment of Guards thought proper to do. Ye’ll understand, I hope, that although I shall not swerve an inch from the offeecal poseetion which I have taken up, if ony man’s feelings are hurt by my proceedings, or if regi-

mental susceptibilities have been excited, I am much at the service of the injured or any one representing the injured."

"Nay, my dear colonel," answered Sir Digby Prestige, suavely, "you have entirely mistaken the meaning of my observations, I assure you. I had not the least intention of hinting at anything unfriendly on my own part, and I have no shadow of warrant for doing so on the part of any one else. I simply appealed to your good-nature, in the hope that what affects the feeling of a whole battalion might have been regarded by you as worthy of some concession; and——"

"Pardon me, Sir Digby, for interrupting ye. It seems to me that ye're mixing up two things that are vera distinct, one from another—that is to say, military discipline and *esprit de corps*: the latter I should be the last man to wish to wound; but as to the former, I am inflexible. I regret extremely that a report such as I made was called for; but as, unfortunately, it was necessary, I must decline to retract a word of it. And now, perhaps ye'll excuse me if I ask that we leave the subject."

Sir Digby Prestige bowed.

"Ye'll scarcely be living yon in such a puddle as we are cursed with here," said Mackechnie.

"Pretty well for that," answered Sir Digby, seeing that it would be utterly useless to attempt to continue

his appeal ; “the weather is intolerable. One never feels dry.”

“For that damp sensation there’s nothing like a drop of good spirit. Let me offer ye another thimbleful of the whisky.”

Sir Digby Prestige was a politic man. He thought it possible that compunction might visit Mackechnie after *his* visit had terminated, and he would submit to martyrdom that that small chance should not be extinguished. “You tempt me cruelly, Colonel Mackechnie,” he said. “I do not usually allow myself to taste spirits in the day-time, but this is an exceptional occasion ; the excellence of the draught defies rules. I drink to—I forget stupidly the name of the whisky’s birthplace ?”

“Glen-schnilder ; an insigneeficant domain, I fear.”

“I drink to Glen-schnilder and its surroundings. I trust I may live to see the Highlands again.”

“Indeed, and I trust so, Sir Digby. It would be a proud day when I could welcome ye in the glen. May it not be far off ! Here’s to your vera good health.”

A few more indifferent remarks, and then Sir Digby Prestige took his leave, parting from old Mackechnie with a hearty—or an imitation of a hearty—shake of the hand.

It need scarcely be said that the failure of Sir Digby Prestige’s mission caused considerable disappointment

and perplexity in du Lys's circle of friends. Everybody had calculated that a homely old campaigner like Mackechnie would be entirely overcome by the visit of so eminent a personage as Sir Digby Prestige, and had made sure that the persuasion of such an advocate, and the light in which he would be made to see his own presumption, would bring him to reason. "Impracticable savage!" "Damn'd, obstinate old fool!" "What the devil shall we do with him?" "Curse his impudence!" were expressions very current that evening among du Lys's friends and comrades. "Leave him to reflect awhile; something may come of that," was Sir Digby Prestige's advice; but Sir Digby's influence was for the moment a good deal shaken by his failure, and there was no great disposition manifested to be guided by his counsel. Neither was waiting of the least use. Mackechnie made no sign of relenting, and there were some signs from other quarters that were not regarded as at all satisfactory.

Du Lys's *confrères* had not failed, while the affair was in progress, to observe every form likely to propitiate the press. The representatives of that estate were duly feasted and flattered. The majority of them were fully convinced of the unreasonableness and wickedness of Mackechnie's conduct. Some of them even, in moments of enthusiastic good-fellowship, swore

that they would write down the old pest and extinguish him. But this did not solve the difficulty. And, unfortunately, there were one or two hard-headed correspondents who altogether refused to see the thing in the same light as the young Guardsmen—ill-conditioned, vulgar fellows certainly, but men who declared that they would show up the whole case, and take the opinion of the British nation thereon. The du Lysites, to do them justice, were not in the least appalled by this announcement, feeling strong in the consciousness that the privileges of the Guards were of such vital consequence to the country, that all other (which were necessarily minor) considerations must give way before them. They stood their ground, therefore. But, unfortunately, the general Staff had had much reason lately to doubt whether the aristocratic sentiment of the country was strong enough just now to cause the right (in a Guardsman's sense) to prevail. It (the Staff) had met with some severe rubs, and there was a general impression at home that the country might be better served than by it. There were, moreover, indications that some parties at home would not be at all sorry to catch the Staff tripping, and to let loose vials of wrath against it. All things considered, therefore, the Staff was at last, as to all matters that were likely to occupy the minds of the people at home, supposed to be inclined to put away its courtly feelings, and to

come out a little in the patriotic line. It would not, as was afterwards proved, shrink even from offering a victim to the unreasonable prejudices of the nation, if by that act it could soften opinion towards itself.

Now, while the firmness of the Staff was understood to be thus wrought upon, it happened that one of du Lys's friends, intending to signalise his friendship and his *esprit de corps*—also to show the contempt in which he held Colonel Mackechnie and his likes, and the summary way in which they ought to be made to know their place—challenged the said Mackechnie to mortal combat. And, as some unmilitary readers may be inclined to remark that a *rencontre* of this kind (supposing it to be warrantable at all) was du Lys's business, and should not have been effected by deputy, let it be explained that du Lys was, until the complaint against him should be disposed of, under Mackechnie's command as far as concerned that business, in which the old colonel had been commanding-officer and du Lys one of the subordinates. It would, therefore, have been an outrageous thing if, having been pulled up for neglecting duty, he had replied by calling out his superior. Imperfectly instructed as du Lys and his associates were in military obligations and usages, they at least knew that calling out a superior about a matter of duty was a thing that could not be endured. Therefore it was that du Lys's enterprising

comrade took up the quarrel. If their knowledge had extended a little farther than it did, they would have seen that any attempt to turn a matter of duty into a personal dispute was an impropriety. Mackechnie had personally done nothing to du Lys; he had merely placed that officer's conduct before their common superior, from whom, if from any one, would come the decision on it. But this was a refinement quite beyond the hot-headed young warriors, and Captain the Honourable Percy Blanke thought he had shown a nice discrimination, and steered cleverly between sentiment and duty, when he sent his cartel of defiance to old Mackechnie.

Mackechnie came of a race to whom a nod or a wink will suffice when fighting is in question. The little tribe which knew how to distil the whisky of which honourable mention was made above, had a trick also of baring their weapons on the very slightest intimation that any one would like to see the polish of them. Therefore a very brave and a somewhat supercilious captain of the Guards and an ancient red-faced major of one of the Scotch regiments were immediately in communication touching the approaching affair of honour, and represented the parties to that engagement.

In an exceedingly snug ravine which divided the ground irregularly for some distance away from

Sebastopol, the two seconds just named put up Blanke and Mackechnie at twelve paces' distance to try their skill upon each other. Blanke, who would have given himself without flinching to be skinned or roasted, if either of those ordeals had been his vocation, stood up with perfect *sang froid* to play his part in the duel; only, as this was his first appearance in an action of the kind, he was a little awkward at posing. His second did not seem to have much more practical skill than himself, and knew not how to regulate the minutiae of his proceedings. But Mackechnie's friend, who was as learned in the etiquette of the *duello* as Captain Fluel-len or Dugald Dalgetty, soon gave them the benefit of his experience, and put things in order. On the other hand, in the science in which Blanke and his friend were tyros, Mackechnie had graduated in honours. He had forgotten more fighting than they ever heard of, had drawn his first blood when their fathers were bachelors, and had once, at Gibraltar, gone to meet all the officers of an American frigate, whose several apologies he accepted after he had wounded three of them. Even the warlike priggism of the major his second was silent as to the proceedings of such a veteran. He no more dared to hint to the colonel at a modification of posture or bearing than a gentleman usher at the Sicilian Court would have presumed to instruct Lord Nelson as to the forms to be observed

in the presence of King Nasone. Mackechnie, as he took his ground, knocked the ashes out of a venerable pipe, which he deposited in some recess of his apparel with care, quite as if he intended to use it again, and then he addressed himself to business. His look, which was really one of kindness for the fine young man who had so needlessly brought him into the ravine, might on those grim features be mistaken by a careless observer for the glance of an ogre at tender flesh. But he soon showed what his real feeling was, for he used his opponent as though he loved him, according to Isaac Walton's maxim, and on the word being given to fire, hit him well in rear of his right hip. The wound bled, and Blanke (small blame to him) turned very faint, having never before run claret in that fashion. If it be asked what became of the captain's bullet, with which he had undoubtedly intended to relieve the service of all farther trouble on Mackechnie's account, we know by the universal law that it had its billet, but the locality of that billet has hitherto eluded the keen research of topographers.

Blanke's misfortune ended the fight. There was a surgeon lying hid round a twist of the ravine, and he made his appearance a minute after the catastrophe had happened. While Mackechnie withdrew his pipe from its retreat, remarking in a low tone as he did so,

She's no cauld yet, the quean," and while he charged

and lighted it, the doctor took a general survey of the hurt. "Twill not be a long business," said he, "and the consequences will not be serious." Blanke's consequence was, however, deeply lacerated, and he was put to considerable agony before they found and extracted Mackechnie's little memorandum. And after this had been done, the honourable Percy Blanke went down, as his friend du Lys had gone before him, to recruit his strength, and repair the habitation of his honour, on the banks of the Bosphorus.

Although literally this thing was done in a corner, yet it was, in less than an hour after it took place, as well known and as much talked of as if it had been acted in the sight of all men. It had been a most unfortunate move; it decided the course of certain of the Staff who had lately been halting ignobly between loyalty to the Guards and dread of the more audacious newspapers. It threw ridicule over the case, and put du Lys and his supporters ten times more in the wrong than they were before. Some resolution must be taken at once, and it was taken. Du Lys's colonel was sent for, and informed in the kindest and most regretful language, that under the untoward circumstances it would be impossible to extend to the Guards that support which on most occasions their merits demanded, and which every person, not blinded by prejudice, desired to accord. He could not deny

the threatening aspect of affairs ; and, after a few appropriate lamentations, he entered into a friendly consultation concerning the sacrifice which might be necessary in order to satisfy the evil spirit that was abroad. Du Lys was the victim. His colonel wrote a reply to Mackechnie's complaint, acknowledging that a serious neglect had been committed, and unreservedly handing over the offender to justice. And, inasmuch as it was not advisable to give to the enemies of the Guards then present with the army an occasion to blaspheme, du Lys was ordered to proceed forthwith to England.

It gave some sort of colour to this measure of sending him home that he had just succeeded, in ordinary course, to the regimental rank of captain and lieutenant-colonel, casualties having been numerous in his battalion ; so people were left to suppose, if they pleased, that his promotion and his return were connected, which was not really the case.

Thus was du Lys's career untimely cut short. All opportunity of distinguishing himself was taken away. He was to go home under a cloud, and to undergo whatever punishment the authorities at home might decide on. Reams of paper went home with him, giving different versions of his case, and for the most part praying that so well connected a culprit might be leniently dealt with.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW FRIENDS—A LOVE-TOKEN.

TIME began to flee away rapidly with Thyrza Knowles. She was leading a life which, though she had never allowed herself explicitly to desire it, had been implicitly one of the strongest wishes of her heart. She associated daily with persons of birth and culture. Partly with study—for the girl worked hard—and partly in exercises and amusements, her time was most delightfully occupied. Somehow or other she had cast her peasant slough as easily as if nature had arranged that it should come off about her eighteenth year; and she took to gentle ways instinctively, as that ugly duck that we have read of found that his vocation was to float with swans. Her perception was quick; she rapidly learned from her own observation the ways of people of fashion, but where she had a doubt about what it was proper to do she was not ashamed to ask. On the occasion of her

first dining at Malmseymead, when a gentleman came and offered her his arm, she was puzzled as to what it meant, and looking round for some friendly glance to direct her, caught the eye of Lord Hardyknute, who at once understood what the trouble was, and as he led away a heavily-jewelled dowager, made the smallest possible inclination of his head to show her that all was going regularly. After that he exercised a sort of silent chaperonage over Thyrza, who began to look upon him as a friend and refuge. Hardyknute's manner won confidence at once. Later in her history, when a little friendship began to spring up between Emma Seward and herself, she used to get a lesson from Emma as to the proper etiquette of any new combination in which she was likely to take part.

Emma Seward habitually did kindnesses without any special inducement ; yet, in thus superseding Lord Hardyknute as Thyrza's guide, she was conscious of something beyond her habitual promptings. She did not quite approve the little confidences that she used to observe between her cousin and Thyrza. It seemed to her that Thyrza was capable of instilling as many ideas as she might receive, and that she was a dangerous pupil for a young man to teach. Not unfrequently, as the spring came on, did Emma revert with a feeling of comfort to that little inadvertent remark about du Lys, for which she had rallied Thyrza in the

earliest days of their acquaintance. Indeed, Emma had a certain awe of Thyrza. While leading and training her, she could not fail to perceive her quick discrimination and her natural advantages of manner—how modest and unassuming she was, and yet with what simple frankness she spoke and acted when it was becoming in her to speak or act.

Thyrza looked upon Emma, who had been bred a gentlewoman, and who was initiated in all the mysteries of the *beau monde*, much as Orson looked upon Valentine; she revered and worshipped her. She thought there was a gulf between them that could never be bridged over. And she took Emma for her ensample and standard, while all the time it seemed to Emma that she had formed a fellowship with a Dryad, who, though she in small things smacked of the woods, yet showed also infallible signs of being not an ordinary mortal.

Thyrza had not received from nature a too high esteem of herself, but she was rendered more humble than nature had made her by thought of the high requirements of du Lys. Was it possible that any study or any practice could make her such as she desired in his eyes to appear? He would scarcely be so easy to satisfy as King Cophetua was. Even among the high-bred female acquaintances which she had made, not a soul did she see that she thought worthy of du Lys, or that she could fancy him stooping to

regard with affection. How, then, could she hope that he could ever think approvingly of her with all her imperfections? The very fact that he had from among peasant girls singled her out for condescending notice, told against the possibility of his preferring her to damsels of his own class. She might have had a few advantages over the brown, sluttish, awkward lasses of the village; but these advantages would be blemishes when she should be compared with the beauties of high rank, who might derive all that she had, or more than she had, from nature, and might have enhanced the same a thousand times by education and intercourse. It was a desperate fancy this secret of hers; but, desperate as it was, it sufficed to make the girl a student as zealous as a young alchemist in chase of the magic stone, or a Peri labouring for the removal of her disabilities.

Let it be clearly understood that Thyrza was not following after showy accomplishments. She was far too sensible to be putting on gilding before the surface which was to receive it had been formed and smoothed. It was the parts of useful knowledge, such as are comprehended in the ordinary idea of the education proper for a gentlewoman, that she was acquiring. Not even dancing would she learn at present, until her want of the solid branches of instruction should be remedied. How far she did justice to du Lys's tastes and appraise-

ment is another question; if she endued him with discernment and sensibilities somewhat in excess of his real attributes, she is not the first woman who has so distinguished her idol. There was one before her who said—

“ It were all one
That I should love a bright particular star,
And think to wed it, he is so above me ;
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.”

But let us pass now to another subject.

Mr Darke had, as his son John had said, personally managed the business relating to the recovery of Claybarrow. He himself it was, therefore, who always went to consult with the widow Knowles concerning the legal steps of the case. But he did not in any visit omit to make mention of his son John, or to try and discover what progress the young man was making in Thyrza's good opinion. Since the removal to Beech Lodge, it was evident, from the tone of Mr Darke's remarks, that some part of Mr John's conduct was causing dissatisfaction. If Mrs Knowles had thought proper to be at all inquisitive, or even to manifest an interest in what he said, she would most likely have received a very full confidence, and have been requested to lend her aid in endeavouring to rectify what was amiss. But she did not by any means encourage conversation on that topic.

After an interview in which Mr Darke had in vain essayed to discuss Mr John, it occurred to Mrs Knowles that rather a long time had elapsed since they had seen the younger gentleman ; and, the next morning at breakfast, she said to Thyrza that she thought Mr John's passion must be cooling. Thyrza hoped that, for some reasons of his own, Mr John had seen fit to discontinue his visits. Both mother and daughter flattered themselves that the young hero might now be dismissed from their thoughts. But before the day had passed they were convinced of the imprudence of reckoning in that rash way on the course which may be taken by persons of superior mind, whose ways (as they should have known) are often inscrutable.

Miss Seward had promised to come that day or the next to accompany Thyrza to the house of two women who were lacemakers ; so when the roll of a carriage was heard outside, and the carriage appeared to have stopped at the door, it was taken for granted by the inmates of Beech Lodge that Miss Seward had arrived. But that was not the case ; when the door opened it was Mr John Darke and not Miss Seward who was ushered in—Mr John Darke elaborately embellished. There was no cigar in Mr John's mouth ; and the comfortably furnished room where the ladies were sitting had such an effect on him that he took off his hat on entering it. The edge was taken off Mr John's assur-

ance by seeing the two seated like gentlewomen—one working, the other writing ; his swagger left him, whether he would or no, and all his wit could suggest nothing to put in place of it. The consequence was, that he looked very silly. Mrs Knowles endeavoured to relieve his embarrassment by saying, “Good morning, Mr John Darke.” In reply to which salutation Mr John, with anything but his usual fluency, and with none of his ordinary ease of manner, said—

“Oh, I thought I would look in to see the ’ouse ; I ’ope it’s all right. If I’m not wanted I’ll——”

“Pray be seated, Mr Darke,” said Mrs Knowles ; and Thyrza left her writing, and came and spoke to him : and with some hesitation he at last sat down, not astride on his chair ; and he literally waited to be spoken to. Mrs Knowles, in reference to his mention of the “’ouse,” then observed—

“The house has been excellently chosen. We are delighted with it, and so much obliged to Mr Darke.”

“Ah !” answered Mr John, his presence of mind in the least degree reviving ; “yes, I see it’s a genteelish crib. Rather a pleasant change from the other ’ovel.”

“It is a great change indeed, and a very pleasant one.”

“And you find it rather a jolly change, I’ll be

bound, ah—h um—m——” he thought of adding “Thyrza,” but the word stuck in his throat.

“Oh, I am delighted with it!” said Thyrza. “It is all strange; but this new way of living is charming, all the same.”

“Hah, ha! I believe you; nothing like the ready for making things look charming, is there, Thyrza?” He got it out this time. His self-possession was coming back.

“Money alone doesn’t make you sure of enjoyment,” answered Thyrza: “if we had had sickness or some other great trouble, the money couldn’t have made us happy.”

“No, I dessay not,” said Mr John, fidgeting. “You’ll be going to London to have a fling before long, I’ve no doubt. I should like to be there at the time. I think I could put you up to a thing or two.”

“Why, we are not settled here yet,” put in Mrs Knowles, “and do you suppose that we shall run away at once after the sights and gaieties of London?”

“I should, if I had plenty of tin and there was no governor. Take my word for it, it’s the only place where a person of spirit can enjoy themselves. And I apprehend that we *’ave* a person of spirit here”—looking at Thyrza.

“I assure you,” said Thyrza, “I am thinking of many other things much more than of seeing London.

My education was suddenly stopped when we left Sandacres, and I must learn a few things before I think of amusement."

This was a new idea to Mr John. Instead, however, of bestowing a malediction on it, and withering it with his contempt, as it was his nature to do, he strained his conscience a little and acquiesced.

"Yes, certainly," said he, "there's some things that you'll find to be great 'elps when you come into contact with the world: in fact, if you go in for a career anyways intelligent, they're indispensable." Then, looking round, "I don't see a pianer about. I suppose you'll be at the rum-tum-ta"—and he imitated the motions of a person playing on the pianoforte.

"I have never thought about that. I was thinking of a homelier sort of instruction."

"You're sure to have a pianer. They all do. Seems to be the thing. And now, while we're talking of that, I'll just give a 'int that may be of service. There's a low feller about calling himself Minim—nobby name, isn't it? faugh!—well, he's an impostor, that's all. Knows no more of 'armony than I do; indeed not 'alf so much." (Mr John's life and conversation suggested music and the fine arts generally.) "Have nothing to do with that cad. 'Ang him!"

"Of course," said Thyrsa, "this man with the odd name doesn't teach Miss Fullerton."

Mr John looked reproachfully at Thyrza, and when he had fixed her eye, glanced towards Mrs Knowles with an expression which inculcated that she had been guilty of extreme indiscretion in even betraying her knowledge that there was a Miss Fullerton, while Mrs Knowles was required to believe that he lived only for Thyrza.

“No,” pursued Mr John, covering this bit of by-play, and dexterously eluding Thyrza’s remark—“no; for music, old Thrumscale’s the man. No ’umbug about him. A little old-fashioned, perhaps, but he’s regular well grounded in his——”

Mr John was here interrupted by the opening of the door, and by the entrance of a lady and gentleman who were announced as—

“Miss Seward.” “Lord Hardyknute.”

Very friendly greetings were interchanged between the ladies of the house and the visitors just arrived—a gentle flood of exclamations, and short questions, for answers to which no time was allowed. When all this subsided, and seats were once more being put to use, the figure of Mr John Darke was perceptible, erect and very rigid, behind the chair on which he lately sate. One of his hands clutched nervously at his hat, the other grasped and released by turns the top bar of the chair. His eyes glanced with furtive wildness from right to left; distress was written on his features—it was presumable from their expression that he

was mentally urging the gods to be ready with all their thunderbolts, and to dash him to pieces without loss of time.

“Oh, Darke, is that you? Good morning to you; I did not recognise you before. Your father with you?” said his lordship. Then to Mrs Knowles, “I hope, my dear madam, that we do not interrupt business?”

“No, indeed, Lord Hardyknute. Mr John Darke was good enough to call and ask if all was going well with us in our new dwelling. Pray be seated, Mr Darke.”

To which invitation Mr John replied, somewhat incoherently, “Perfectly: I beg your pardon.” He then sat down on the chair’s edge, brought his knee-joints to right angles, and nursed his hat between them, clasping the rim with his ten fingers.

Emma Seward and Thyrza had entered into earnest consultation about the lace which they were going to see. Lord Hardyknute talked cheerily to Mrs Knowles of a dozen things interesting to them for the moment. Mr John Darke sat among them in mute despair, not exactly wishing that he had wings like a dove, because he didn’t remember that such a wish had ever been invented, but desiring, in his own mental phraseology, to flee away and be at rest. “Hook it” was one of the expressions which presented themselves.

But much as he desired to be away, he had not resolution to make his escape.

Mrs Knowles, perceiving that Mr John was thrown out of the conversation, was desirous of addressing a remark to him, and cast her eyes once or twice towards him as she waited for a pause in her dialogue with Lord Hardyknute. His lordship observing one of these glances, and understanding the purpose of the lady of the house, turned with his usual good-nature towards Mr John, and asked him whether they had settled the contest about the Scrone churchwarden; to which Mr John replied, in a very faint voice—

“I believe so, my lord—that is, I ain’t sure; but I rather think not.”

“Unfortunate thing,” said his lordship; “this church dispute has set all Scrone by the ears; they got on so quietly for a long time. Well for you, Mrs Knowles, that ladies have not votes, or these parish matters would give you more trouble than you would like.”

“I think we are in Redthrop parish, which is quite rural. Is not that our parish, Mr Darke?”

“Quite so, ma’am. That is exactly it, if you please.”

“I thought I remembered something about *all that house and garden situate in the parish of Redthrop* in the papers which your father brought me,” answered she, smiling.

“By the way,” interjected Lord Hardyknute, “the

mention of the garden reminds me that I brought the book with the patterns of flower-beds. How very stupid I am! But for that remark of yours I might have driven away again with the book; but we will soon have it now. If you allow me, I'll—oh, Darke, you'll speak to the servant below, won't you? Will you just tell him to bring the book I left in the carriage?"

Mr John, feeling the joy of a reprieved convict, sprang up, saying—

"I will, my lord; yes, my lord; I'll bring it myself, my lord," and was through the door in an instant.

"Not so sharp a man as his father," said Lord Hardyknute. "Old Darke's rather a long-headed person in his way."

The widow smiled. "Mr John Darke is a very young man," she said.

The words were scarcely spoken when Mr John, with the book in his hand, was again in presence.

"Ah, thank you very much, Darke," said Lord Hardyknute. "I am dreadfully forgetful. And that reminds me of another thing. I wish you'd tell your father that the road meeting is to come off on Friday after all. Old Mr Crump's better again. I daresay you'll see him" (meaning his father) "to-day."

"I will, my lord; yes, I shall see him, my lord, almost immediately; indeed I ought to be there now,

my lord; must a—um—m—m immediately.” The unmeaning letters indicate a sound with which Mr John ingeniously bridged over a hiatus. He dared not say “hook it,” and no other phrase would present itself in time.

“I wish your lordship good morning,” said Mr John, timidly, but with relief at his heart.

“Good day,” said Lord Hardyknute, and held out his hand. Mr John touched the hand, then turned and made a rush for the door, in the midst of which manœuvre he remembered that he had not taken leave of the ladies. Whereupon he checked himself in full career, and turned and did obeisance with foot, hat, and head. After this the way was clear, and he “hooked it” in earnest.

Mr John did not know how he got to his carriage, so tumultuous were his emotions; but he did get there, and he mounted the box, he himself choosing to be charioteer that day. As they covered the first mile no sound escaped the young man except “By gosh!” which expression he used twice. At the end of the mile he let his whip into the horse, and gave him a little treat of up and down hill at a sweltering pace. When he was in a profuse foam he suddenly checked him, saying, “Now, then, perhaps that’ll make you go a little more steadily, d—— ye.” The poor horse had been going steadily enough. It was the whirlwind of

Mr John's own thoughts which had suggested unsteadiness.

Now it should be explained that Lord Hardyknute was a very important person indeed in his own district, where he interested himself in all public matters. He was lord also of extensive manors. He was affable and liberal. He was decidedly the first of the rural deities. Old Mr Darke did a great deal of work with boards and committees and associations, at the meetings of some of which he was assisted by his son; so that the Messieurs Darke, governor and governed, knew Lord Hardyknute by sight very well, and even communicated with him from a proper distance. That was one thing; but for Mr John to find himself suddenly in the same drawing-room with his lordship, where they both were visitors, was another thing—a thing which tried his mettle rigorously, conscious as he was that he had been accustomed to swagger and to show off his insolent airs before the very people whom the peer had now come to visit as if they were on his own level. He had seen Miss Seward meet Thyrsa, and sit apart with her, and discuss little matters of common interest, as if they had been children together, and friends all their lives—Thyrsa, whom he had patronised and annoyed, and to whom he had intrusted the secret of his relations with Jessie Fullerton. He had seen the widow to whom he had prated about getting

her doctors' bills paid by her son-in-law treated by the great magnate of that region as if she were one of his own blood or class. It was crushing to his intellect to comprehend such a surprise.

Then as he neared home, and thoughts of daily affairs forced themselves upon him, there was no comfort on that side either. Jessie, to whom he would have wished to pour out his heart, was distant and unconcerned; she would have been merry over his confidence, and had a laugh over it with her music-master, bad word him! Jessie's idea of being jealous of Thyrza! wasn't that a good one? If Jessie could only guess to what a height Thyrza had mounted now! how little likely she was to stoop to him or his fellows!—only he wouldn't tell her that. No, let her fret herself. But was she really fretting? or was Minim as great a consolation to her as she pretended? It wasn't pleasant musing at all. And the governor, poor old buffer! what would he say, if he knew that Thyrza, whom he had set his heart on having for a daughter-in-law—if the governor only knew that Thyrza was likely to have her pick of the haristocracy, what would he say? "I used to think myself," said he, "a passably lucky card, one that a feller might back to win; but now it looks as if the world was gone contrary, and was driving cussed crosses into me, as if I was a pin-cushion. Who's to stand this

sort of thing, eh? What's the use of living on if this is to be the game? I'd rather be out of the muddle altogether. I'll 'ang myself, damme."

It is not likely that Mr John seriously intended to withdraw himself from a world of which he was so distinguished an ornament. He was probably only shaking his fist at Fortune, and cautioning her as to the calamity which she might cause if she persisted in her present ill-advised course. What came of his bluster, we may see hereafter; but, for the present, we must leave Mr John.

Easter was past, and the country was moving upon London. Emma Seward went to town, and was desirous to ask Thyrza to go thither; but Lord Hardyknute and Sir Eldred Seward both thought that Thyrza, not having yet worn out the pleasures which people with a little means can find in the country, could very well dispense with London for this year. It was possible that she and her mother might be glad to make many arrangements about their new home which could not well be seen to while Thyrza had companions and engagements. And for other reasons it might be inconvenient for Miss Knowles to go to town. Therefore they thought it more delicate to offer no invitation, unless a wish to see the town should be expressed by the inhabitants of Beech Lodge. For her part, Thyrza was not sorry to be left for a while to her mother

and herself. She would work harder and more regularly than she yet had done. She had not yet quite got out of the habit of finding amusement in walking about the country, and now she could not only walk but ride for exercise. And about this riding there is a word to be said. When Thyrza's equestrian powers began to be known, and it was an established fact in natural history that she must be mounted, she had asked Lord Hardyknute, who knew every bit of horse-flesh within a circuit of many miles from Malmseymead, to procure for her a suitable animal; and this his lordship promised to do. He was the reverse of slothful in business, and he was remarkable for the punctuality with which he kept his word. And yet in this instance he was for ever procrastinating and excusing himself. He could not see anything that exactly answered his idea: he expected a very clever horse to be shown him next week: he had been looking at what seemed a perfect lady's horse, and had all but secured it, when fortunately he discovered that it crossed its legs in the gallop—a defect which might produce such consequences, that he shuddered to think how nearly he had been the instrument of making it hers. Then at every postponement of the business he would say that though it was very tiresome to be so long balked of one's wish, yet that practically no inconvenience could proceed from it as long as Miss

Knowles would condescend to ride a horse from his stables. When his departure for London came to be talked about, still no purchase had been made; and he now said that, as it was possible that he might not be able to execute his commission at all that spring, he begged particularly that Miss Knowles would use a horse and groom of his whenever she might require them, and said that a messenger should call every day at Beech Lodge to take her orders on that subject. Thyrsa declined this offer at first, but her refusal was of no use. Lord Hardyknute was not making a complimentary tender, but clearly meant what he said, and evidently was mortified at the thought of a refusal. In the end, therefore, the arrangement was made as he desired.

A little before Emma Seward left for London, Thyrsa, when sitting at her window at work, saw Michael Clipp come limping up to the door of Beech Lodge. She did not remember to have seen him since their good fortune had come to them, and she was very glad now of the opportunity of saying a kind word to him and asking after his relatives. She shut her book, therefore, and descended to the lower floor where she found Michael standing in the entrance-hall with a deal box by his side.

"If you please, miss," said Michael, uncovering, "I was told by Mr Hudson the carrier to——"

"Heyday, Michael!" interrupted Thyrza, "how formal you have become! I am very glad to see you. Come in and rest after your hot walk."

Michael was a little distressed by his ignorance of the relations which were now proper between him and the young lady—who looked every inch a young lady in her handsome clothes. But as he *felt* right about the matter, he acquitted himself very well. Michael drew back his lame foot and made a bow, and then he went in as he was desired, and took the seat to which Thyrza invited him in a little room used in the business of housekeeping by Mrs Knowles.

"I thought mother would have been here," said Thyrza; "but she isn't far off, and I daresay you'll see her directly. Well, Michael, you seem as well as usual, but how are your sisters?"

"Well, they be somewhat better, Thyrza—that is, miss; the warmer weather agrees with 'em, and they found some kind friends who've been nourishing of 'em for many months, of which they be all the livelier."

"Indeed, I'm glad of that. And your father, is he pretty well?"

"Well, father's pretty brisk too, I thank you. Everything is going better since the Lady du Lys took to befriending of us."

Thyrza gave a little start on hearing the name,

which Michael, who was, as we know, a little too well informed concerning a secret of hers, perceived and understood. "Dang it!" thought he, "of all the stupid things I could ha' done, I've done the stupidest." He was much confused. He coughed, and wiped his face with his handkerchief, which gave him a moment to collect his wits; and so he bethought him of his errand, and took refuge in that. He did not reflect that Thyrza knew nothing of his knowledge, and that therefore he need not have appeared at all conscious before her.

"Mr Hudson, the carrier," said he, abruptly, "have told me to bring out the box that's now in the passage. It come on from Plymouth, and there's nothing to pay as far as Brigend; only, as his cart don't come along this road, he said I was to bring it out."

"A box!" said Thyrza, "and from Plymouth! It can't be for us;" and she rose to look at it. There was the address written in unmistakable characters—

Thyrza Knowles,

St Ann's Cottage,

Brigend,

Near Wyde.

"Why, it is addressed to me, not mother," she said.
"How very strange!"

“What is strange?” asked Mrs Knowles, appearing on the scene. “Oh, Michael, how do you do? It seems an age since I saw you.”

“Michael has brought this box from Brigend, and it is addressed to me. Look here; ‘Thyrza Knowles.’ Isn’t it odd? What can it be?”

“There can be no doubt that it is intended for you, and we shall soon know the contents when we get it open,” said the widow; “but let us now get Michael some refreshment. I daresay he’s in need of it.” And then they bade Michael return to his chair, and, while he took a slight repast, made him tell them about all their late neighbours at Brigend. Thyrza had proposed that the servants should open the newly-arrived box, and satisfy their curiosity at once. But Mrs Knowles, who knew that Michael was a good deal given to gossiping, thought that the opening would be best done after he had left. So it appeared that the servants were busily employed just then, and could not be interrupted. Thyrza herself had not become so delicate but that she would have fetched a chisel and hammer and had it open in a minute; only she was trying, for reasons of her own, to suit her doings to her new station. And Michael offered to be the opener; howbeit Mrs Knowles wanted to talk to him, and said there was no hurry about the box.

Michael finished his viands, and his visit, and re-

ceived a liberal remuneration for his trouble, as well as something to take back to his sisters by way of remembrance from Mrs and Miss Knowles; and so departed, musing very deeply over the caprices of Fortune, and trying to understand why it should be that the acquisition of a fair property by the widow Knowles and her daughter should so alter things that he, Michael, who a few months ago, after the death of Betwold, had pitied their hard lot, and thanked God that even his father's circumstances were not so miserable as theirs, should now be quite shy and awkward in approaching them. Michael was too wise ever to speak as if he made a distinction between one woman and another; and by his reticence on such subjects he probably escaped a good deal of village banter. But however unlikely nature had made him to please a female eye, she had not failed to give him the same affections as his fellows. He had his silent preferences and admirations; and there is some reason to believe that, had circumstances permitted him to show himself in the character of a lover, it was at Thyrsa Knowles's feet that he would have laid his petition. It was his regard for Thyrsa which moved him to such wrath when he suspected du Lys of "following her," as he called it; and it was anxiety for Thyrsa's good name, as much as a peasant's indignation at the heartlessness of a rich man, that made

him so prompt to warn Thyrza's uncle of what was going on.

Michael rejoiced much at Captain du Lys's departure; and although he and his relations received continual proofs of the goodwill of the family at the Tower of Lys, to whom the Captain had recommended them, yet he could not think of their benefactor but with aversion. "If it had pleased God to take him when we heard that he was stabbed so bad by the Rooshans, now, what harm would have been done, I wonder? He'll live to do mischief in plenty, we shall see. And now Thyrza's a lady, will he dare to follow her again if he should come home?" This was too difficult a question for Michael. Thyrza was at any rate beyond the sphere of his observation, and he must reconcile himself to seeing her but seldom and from a great distance, and to having very scanty knowledge of her history.

Michael, however, after his departure from Beech Lodge, did not long occupy the thoughts of the ladies who resided in that dwelling. Their curiosity had been greatly excited by the box which he had brought, and before Michael was a hundred yards on his way home, the box was groaning and cracking under the hands of a stout girl named Maggy, who, with the aid of a chisel, soon tortured it into a full revelation of its secret.

“Why, whatever!” exclaimed Thyrsa, as she unwound some yards of outlandish paper from one of the extracted parcels—“why, it’s a shoe, and all over gold embroidery! Who in the world can have sent it, and what can it mean? And here’s another of a different pattern—richer, this one, and crimson. There must be two pairs.”

Mrs Knowles examined the articles after Thyrsa, and was as much surprised as she was. “It looks like something made for a theatre,” observed she. “But why it has come to you is past my understanding.”

“There they are now, you see,” broke in Thyrsa. “Four pairs in all, and all different. It’s hard to say which is prettiest.”

“How lovely!” put in the servant who had opened the box, and had not failed to remain and see it emptied. “La, that do beat anything I ever! ’Tis like the Queen of Sheba in the picture, or the Chinese rope-dancer at Scrone Fair.”

“And see here, mother; here inside is another box fastened down. But this one has a clasp and hinges. And cotton within! And just look what’s in the cotton! Oh, did you ever!”

And Thyrsa drew forth a Turkish necklace, to which she had never in her life seen a fellow—a magnificent ornament it seemed to her. “What a

splendid thing!" exclaimed Mrs Knowles, "and all gold! It must be worth a mint of money."

"Oh, miss, you'll look like a hemperess in that," said the servant.

This Maggy was a strong, willing girl, without a pretension to good looks, and, one would have fancied, a very hard-working, prosaic domestic. But, in fact, she was a young woman of sentiment, and she in a manner worshipped beauty. That is to say, she regarded beauty as the most meritorious property that could possibly belong to a female, and seemed satisfied that while the universe was allowed to go on in its course unmolested by evil spirits, embodied or disembodied, beauty would certainly obtain its great reward. Whether her admiration was separate from all thought of self, or whether she was sufficiently satisfied with her own charms to be confident of success whenever she should get fair-play, cannot be decided; but she honestly and liberally admired beauty in others. Thyrza, her young mistress, was in her eyes most commendable, and one whose fortunes it would be well for right-minded young persons to watch. She did not in the least doubt that Thyrza's beauty had been the cause of her translation from a peasant's cottage to the position to which she had now attained; and she was fully persuaded that this rise in the world was but the first of many which were Thyrza's due, and

which she was destined to experience. But to return to the box of treasure.

Thyrza put the necklace on, and Mrs Knowles put it on, giggling in a deprecating way as she did so, to show that she was only in fun, as she despised such gewgaws; and even Maggy was allowed to put it on, and to admire herself, so embellished, in the glass. Then, a minute or two having been allowed for nature to have full way, the young person was gently recalled to the realities of this earth, and of her station therein. And there was more unpacking and more resplendent disclosures. An hour of delight such as is rarely accorded to mortal beings fled away as if it had been only the time required for telling a hundred with moderate haste, in this absorbing entertainment; but at length, after each article had travelled fifty times from hand to hand, the inquiry again occurred: "What can these things mean? Where do they come from?" Once more the outside of the case was examined, and the address verified, which told exactly what it told before, with this little additional information—viz., that it had been forwarded by Messrs Whipple & Co., carriers, of 99 Old Town Street, Plymouth.

"I don't know any one in Plymouth; never did in my life," mused Mrs Knowles.

"But it may be somebody who is there only for a

season. Hundreds go to the west of England at this time of the year," answered Thyrza.

"Very true," her mother said. "But of all those hundreds, can you tell me any one person that was likely to send you such a present as that?—if indeed it be a present," added Mrs Knowles; for she was not without suspicion that some designing tradesman, having heard of their change of circumstances, had despatched this temptation to dazzle their senses, whose little bill, following leisurely, would in a day or two find them so attached to the foundling trinkets that to relinquish them would be impossible.

"Belike," suggested the servant, "it's some great Indian prince that's heard of Miss Thyrza's beauty. Oh, if she should be took into the palace like Queen Esther!"

Well, admiration and guessing, however pleasant it may be, cannot last for ever; and the ladies at Beech Lodge at length gave over those exercises—Thyrza quite bewildered, and the widow almost confirmed in the opinion that an artful dealer was practising on them. And while the debate on the subject was being finished in the drawing-room, Maggy rushed to tell her fellow-servant, Jane, of the glorious things which she had seen and handled. She was entirely at a loss for words of description; but gestures and exclamations were excellent substitutes, and impressed

Jane very deeply. But neither could these two come to agreement as to the sender. Maggy propounded her theory of the prince, of which she was rather proud; but Jane, whose father filled some humble place about the cathedral of the diocese, and who had been trained up in the belief that there is no greatness like the ecclesiastical, inclined to hold that Miss Thyrza had found favour in the eyes of the Lord Bishop, a widowed prelate of 75 years.

“Lor!” said the enthusiastic Maggy, “she might rise to be anything at all—a queen if she liked. A lady bishop’s nothing.”

“I shouldn’t mind being of one,” answered Jane, “if a bishop would follow me.”

“I daresay you wouldn’t.” And Maggy made the last remark in tones unusually cold, not wishing to encourage unfortunate ambitions in a girl like Jane, who, by the by, would have been pronounced by most judges more comely than she.

The mysterious box was talked about above stairs and below. Thyrza extolled its contents to Emma Seward, and invited her to a private view. Emma, imagining from the description that Aladdin’s cave had been sacked and the loot sent express by the genius of the lamp to her friend, arrived at her earliest convenience, being not entirely above the interest which in some female minds is excited by “barbaric

pearls and gold." "I shall be so glad to hear what you think of them, and where they are likely to have come from," said Thyrza, as she produced the box. "Look here: isn't this fine?"

Emma looked at Thyrza to discover whether she was joking, but finding her quite serious, she said, without any derision, "My dear, don't you know what those are? They are a pair of Turkish slippers, articles very well known to many people in this country, and quite common in Eastern bazaars. And those are necklaces, very well as being somewhat curious, but of little value. Perhaps you are not much acquainted with oriental wares?"

"No," answered Thyrza, honestly; "I never saw anything like these before." She was hurt at finding Miss Seward set so little store by things which had so astonished herself.

"I am sorry," said Emma, "to be the person to disenchant you; yet, after all, perhaps I am not sorry, because I would not like to have any ill-natured person sneer at the mistake. I have, or I once had, ornaments very like these, which my cousin brought me from some place in the east of Europe."

"These came from Plymouth," interposed Thyrza. "The house they came from is marked on the box."

"My dear, they came from Plymouth last, I doubt not, because landed there; but they are made in Egypt

or Turkey or Syria, you know. Now that troop-ships and store-ships are coming every day from the seat of war to Portsmouth and Plymouth and those Admiralty places, packages of all sorts find their way there."

A little exclamation here escaped Thyrza, at the mention of the seat of war. A thought had just flitted for a moment across her brain. To realise that thought would be higher gratification to her than to discover that the trinkets were as rare as the Koh-i-noor.

Miss Seward observed the note of sudden intelligence, but she made no allusion to it. She went on talking of the ornaments, and assured Thyrza that they were very pretty things, and not so common in this country but that a lady might be very glad to possess them, though their intrinsic value was not great. She seemed only anxious lest Thyrza, having been convinced that her own estimate was too high, should be induced now to undervalue her acquisition. And so they talked on. It is remarkable, however, that Thyrza, who had intended to take Emma's opinion as to the source from whence the things came, never alluded to that part of the subject. Neither did Miss Seward volunteer one word concerning the sender. She felt certain that Thyrza had some admirer in the Crimea, and there was something in that certainty far from displeasing to her. To turn from the subject of the necklaces, she then asked Thyrza all about her

studies, and was astonished to find how hard she was working.

"Yes," said Thyrza, "I do hope that before long I shall be able to associate with well-bred people without betraying any very great ignorance and barbarism."

Emma laughed. "My dear," said she; "when you come to know more of the people whom you call well-bred, you will perhaps not be so suspicious of yourself. Look here; this is a note which I received this morning from a young lady of high connections, and who is received everywhere—indeed, you have met her. Pray read it."

Thyrza took it, and read—

"DEAR MISS SEWARD,—Being confined with a sprained foot you would so much oblige if you would allow me to read the little book I saw on your table called the Coasts of the Black Sea or something like that.

"My father died many years since in America (either North or South, I am not sure) and the dear remanes rest there still, so that you can understand why I feel so much interest in that part of the world.

"What lovely weather! I do so envy you that can go about. Poor Me is tied to the sofa, and a sad pennalty it is. But I am taking the oportuneity to read a great deal.—With kindest regards, believe me, ever yours,

ADELAIDE BAILLIE."

She looked much bewildered as she read, but did not venture to criticise; only, after a pause of half a minute, she said timidly, "But what has her father's grave in America to do with the Black Sea?"

"What, indeed!" echoed Emma. "And do you remark the spelling, and the grammar?"

"Well, I thought there were one or two odd things, but I know so little."

"At any rate, you need not be diffident about writing to Miss Baillie, if she should seek to correspond with you."

"How careless she must be!"

"A—yes, careless or otherwise deficient. And do you observe the writing? What a sprawling, irregular hand! And the blots! Learn for your comfort that there are young ladies who are but poorly informed, and who are yet satisfied with their acquirements."

Miss Seward was but little in the habit of ridiculing her acquaintances, and she would not, simply for the sake of having a laugh with Thyrza at Miss Baillie's expense, have exhibited the note. But she fancied that she had bruised Thyrza's feelings by showing her how wrong had been her estimate of the Turkish ornamental ware, and she was glad of a means of healing her self-esteem, and of leaving something consolatory to reflect on after she had gone. She did not know that the value of the present had suddenly become a

matter of secondary importance to Thyrza, or that Miss Baillie's blunders could find only a momentary sojourn in Thyrza's mind, which, indeed, was now full of another and an engrossing thought, as might have been judged by any one who could have seen Thyrza's proceedings after Miss Seward's departure.

No sooner had Emma driven away than Thyrza turned over, in closest examination, the whole of the wrappings that had been round her slippers and necklaces, hoping that some scrap of paper might be discovered among them, or that some word or two might be somewhere written on the paper giving a clue to the quarter from which they had been sent. She felt inside the slippers; she peered into and all over the box which contained the necklaces; she sought to extract some meaning from the bits of card-board, covered with hieroglyphics, which depended from the necklaces; but all in vain. The secret was impenetrable; alas, alas! Stop: the outside box had not been examined so closely as its contents. And as that thought presented itself, away flew Thyrza down to the little room in which Michael had refreshed himself, and where yet the box, now quite empty, was standing in a corner on its end. Breathless with emotion rather than with her rapid descent, the girl caught up the packing-case and scrutinised every inch of it. It seemed a tolerably old receptacle, and as if the

duty lately performed by it had not been the first that it had done. It was battered and scratched, and at one corner the boards had separated a little. There was a large letter P on one end, and there were several numbers varying much in freshness. Still all was dark. "Maggy, Maggy," called Thyrza, "where is the top of this box that had all the fine things in it? have you taken it away?"

"No, miss, I haven't touched it," said Maggy, appearing. "O lauk, yes, miss, but I did! I remember now; I put it in the cellar with some straw on it for the cat to lie on."

"Dear me, is it fit to touch? I wanted particularly to look at it."

"I'll see, miss. I don't think it'll be any the worse. The cellar floor's dry, but again 'tis cold; so Jane and me thought the bit of board with a wisp of straw——"

"Well, run and see; do, Maggy."

Two minutes more, and Maggy, rubbing the box-cover with a house-cloth, was again on the scene. "There 'tis, miss," said she. "You needn't fear to touch it."

Thyrza tore off the address-card to see if by chance it bore any writing on its back, or concealed any letters on the wood. There was nothing there. But it was to be perceived that the cover was of a later date than the box; and from the different colours of the pieces

composing it, the parts of some dismembered case or cases had been used to frame a new top for an old bottom. Marks? yes, there were marks enough on the top, but nothing intelligible. On the under side the boards had been planed, but only roughly; and on one of them where the tool had not caught the surface were visible the letters *uLy*, and no more. But these were enough. "It is, it is," said Thyrza's heart. The confirmation was to her as strong as proof of Holy Writ.

"How much nicer a bed for the cat the box itself would make, Maggy! Take that and leave this, for I may want it."

Maggy went; and Thyrza, leaning her head on her hand and her arm on the table, fell into a reverie—the most delightful that she had known for many a day. But the girl had an instinctive sense that reveries such as this were luxuries not to be long or frequently indulged in. So she rallied herself and began to think of the study which Emma's coming had interrupted. Her will to learn, pretty earnest before, had become doubly strong within the last hour. If Thyrza could have ranted like Harry Percy, she would have threatened the pale-faced moon and the bottom of the deep with invasion and pillage that education might be hers; but as she was a sober and self-controlled young woman, she merely recognised the truth that no in-

ducement was wanting henceforth to her acquiring knowledge. She felt that she *would* have it.

By the time that Mrs Knowles returned from a walk which she had been taking, Thyrza had suppressed all signs of emotion. She quietly invited her mother to come into the little room before going up-stairs, and told her that she had discovered some letters under the lid of the box. "Look at them, mother; what do you make of them?" Mrs Knowles was not quite so ready as Thyrza had been to seize the idea. The evidence was not crushing, and there was much excuse for a person who might not be on the instant convinced and instructed by it. The widow turned the box-cover up and down, trying to extract the meaning of the letters. "It must read this way," she said, "because reversed it makes no letters at all. Looked at this way, I see U, L, Y, I think."

"Exactly," said Thyrza—"U, L, Y; what does that mean?"

"Mean, my dear! Why, that middle board must at some time or other have belonged to a person whose name was Ulysses, I suppose. I don't know anybody of that name. Do you?"

"Nay, mother; the u and the y are small letters, while the L is a capital. Now, what do you think?"

"Well, I don't know what to say. Are there lynxes in Peru? Because the Ly seem to be the beginning of

Lynx, and the foregoing word would therefore be one ending in u, as *Peru Lynx*. The board must have formed part of a cage. Perhaps u belongs to a Christian name, or the abbreviation of one, and the name may be Lyster, or Lycett, or Lygon, or Lys."

"Hah!" said Thyrsa, "suppose it were Lys?"

"Yes; or du Lys—a name with which we are better acquainted; but then what would be the Christian name with the small u?"

"Why, don't you see? if it's du Lys the u is accounted for."

"Ah, yes; how stupid! it may have been du Lys, of course. Well, and suppose it means du Lys, what then?"

"Mother, Miss Seward was with me while you were out, and she says these things have come from some Eastern city—she mentioned Constantinople as a probable one. Now, Captain—I mean *Major*—du Lys was very near Constantinople lately, and——"

"Dear, dear! well, however did we fail to think of him before? Of course that looks likely. Well, now!"

"We didn't think of him, mother, because it was difficult to imagine one like him sending gifts across sea to a poor girl as I was when he saw me. I never suspected such a thing till Miss Seward said they came from somewhere near the seat of war, and that

brought the thought of him. Then when I saw some of the letters of his name written on the lid, I felt certain. It must be so, mother."

"Well, it may," said Mrs Knowles; "and a very pretty present too. Perhaps he heard of our change of condition, and thought it might be as well not to let you forget him."

"No, mother, no," said Thyrsa, who did not like this last idea. "Look on the card. It is addressed to plain 'Thyrsa Knowles'—to the peasant girl. No, nobody told him anything. He remembers!"

"It seems likely, my love. Everything is in favour of your guess. He gave you a locket, you know; why not these fine things? Only it mayn't mean anything particular, you know. Very kind, and all that; but I wouldn't let my mind run much on the fancy. It may be all nonsense. Did you tell Miss Seward your suspicion?"

"No; of course not. I have not breathed it to a soul but yourself."

Mrs Knowles looked approvingly at her daughter. "That is right," said she; "let us keep such a suspicion to ourselves." But the widow did not feel the indifference which she was at such pains to preach. She fully believed now that du Lys was the sender; and did not see anything so very extraordinary in that either—even allowing that he still believed them to be

the poor people of St Ann's Cottage. He might look a long way at home or abroad without finding any one to compare with Thyrza. It was a pity he could not see her just now, when certainly she was not looking her worst.

This arrival of the box was an incident which had a large influence in forming the future of Thyrza Knowles. It gave her new hope and new energy. It refreshed like the voice of the Bow bells, or the view from the Delectable mountains. Du Lys had remembered hitherto; he would remember her still — till they might meet again. The fear was lest she should disappoint him when at last the meeting should come. But courage! Fortune had done much to help her; and it would go hard but she would do something to help herself.

Soon after the arrival of the presents, Miss Seward and her father left for London, as did also Lord Hardynute.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.







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